STREET SPIRIT

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JUSTICE NEWS & HOMELESS BLUES IN THE BAY AREA

Scandalous Neglect of San Francisco's Disabled Homeless Population

Homeless people in wheelchairs often are attired in gowns bearing the stenciled initials of prominent S.F. hospitals. The wristbands bearing their names indicate that they were discharged from a hospital to the mean, cold streets.

by Robert L. Terrell

One of the most troubling characteristics of San Francisco's haggard population of homeless people is the depressingly large number of them who are disabled.

Their ailments cover the gamut from serious mental health problems to disabling foot injuries. And those who suffer such maladies are particularly vulnerable for numerous reasons. Long-term life on the streets is conducive to poor health and multiple physical problems.

The catastrophically debilitating impact of such a precarious existence is clearly apparent when one considers the physical liabilities of the disabled segment of the local homeless population.

For many of those who inhabit the streets, foot problems are among the first indications that their health is heading south. Those who are crippled because of neglected, festering foot problems hobble about as best they can with the assistance of walking sticks, canes and crutches.

They are ambulatory, but dangerously vulnerable. In addition to being unable to take care of their daily needs, they can't adequately protect themselves from vandals, thieves and inclement weather.

Given the crude elements of primitive Social Darwinism at the heart of too much of the local governing process, the city's disabled homeless people are also vulnerable to the debilitating impact of catastrophic social, economic and political neglect.

An alarmingly large number of this rarely acknowledged segment of San Francisco's homeless residents are confined to wheelchairs. They represent every major demographic group, and their percentage of the municipal homeless population appears to be growing.

Many of the city's destitute, wheelchair-bound, homeless people seek to occupy locations where they can use their sad plight to elicit spare change, and other

See **SF's Scandalous Neglect** *page 16*



Homeless and gravely disabled on the streets of San Francisco. Robert Terrell photo

Nurturing Artistic Creativity in Low-Income Youth

by Lydia Gans

One way to fight juvenile crime and gang violence is to provide some positive alternatives. Back in the 1960s, during President Lyndon Johnson's War On Poverty, we had Teen Posts, community centers in low-income areas where kids could hang out, learn skills, be involved in activities and make connections beyond their immediate neighborhood.

With a few notable exceptions, there's not much of that available for poor city kids these days.

One exciting program for homeless and low-income young people, aged 16 to 25, is Youth Spirit Art Works, based in Berkeley. Operating out of the art studio on the Berkeley Technology Academy (B-Tech) campus, the program provides a place where young people can learn about art and create their own art works.

Sally Hindman, founder and director of Youth Spirit Art Works, described the multifaceted program where low-income youth can use art to bring about social change, earn money and have fun!

One area of activity, she said, is "taking old, recycled furniture, chairs that people have thrown out, tables that people have donated, and having youth turning them into art. We're planning to begin selling our art beginning March 1. We'll be having our first auction in the fall and our youth have produced more than 45 chairs and tables so far."



Charles Hutson expresses his creativity at the Youth Spirit Art Works. Charles is one of six young people selected due to their outstanding work with Youth Spirit to travel to New Orleans to meet with artists there who have created a successful arts program for low-income youth. Photos by Lydia Gans



Sally Hindman shows a chair creatively redesigned by Youth Spirit Art Works.

The young artists will get 50 percent of everything that is sold. "Let me just say that art furniture is pricey," Hindman added. She has seen painted chairs sell for over $400.

Anywhere from 20 to 30 young people come to the studio every day. The morn-

See **Nurturing Creativity** *page 15*

Giving a Strong Voice to the Homeless Community

by T.J. Johnston

Late afternoon on San Francisco's Turk Street, between Hyde and Larkin, where extreme poverty abounds, two homeless people truck their worldly belongings in shopping carts. They hang out by the Coalition on Homelessness, which is located in an unassuming, yellow concrete building.

While nearby soup kitchens, clinics and shelters may serve to meet the men's survival needs, Bob Offer-Westort works to uphold their human rights.

"I find it hard to ignore people," said Offer-Westort. "It stands out in my perception every time I step out of the house. You see a lot of people in San Francisco ignoring homeless people."

He insists on referring to homeless people, rather than using the stereotyped — and some would say less respectful — phrase 'the homeless.'

As development coordinator, Offer-Westort is in charge of raising money for the Coalition on Homelessness. He seeks out donations from foundations and ordinary people alike.

The Coalition uses the money he raises to monitor shelter conditions, assist homeless people with legal matters and publish their monthly newspaper, *Street Sheet*. Offer-Westort was editor of *Street Sheet* until September. Though his editorial duties have scaled down, he still provides technical assistance.

"It's not a friendly issue to fund for," he explained. "Homelessness is a political issue to begin with. Homeless people don't get good press, which makes it especially harder."

He added, "We need to have an engagement with the 98 percent of the population that's not homeless."

Offer-Westort said the paper is necessary to counter the way homelessness is portrayed in the mainstream media, especially in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Recent *Chronicle* headlines have read: "Enough is enough" and "Something's got to give." The articles, written by C.W. Nevius, depict typically liberal San Franciscans as growing impatient with "aggressive panhandlers, street squatters and drug users."

Offer-Westort said that the *Chronicle's* news coverage of the sweeps of homeless people out from Golden Gate Park and South of Market is unfairly slanted.

He believes the *Chronicle* is using the pieces to drive online readership. One article has garnered almost 1,000 comments on the daily paper's website.

He asked, "When do you run an opinion column on Page One?"

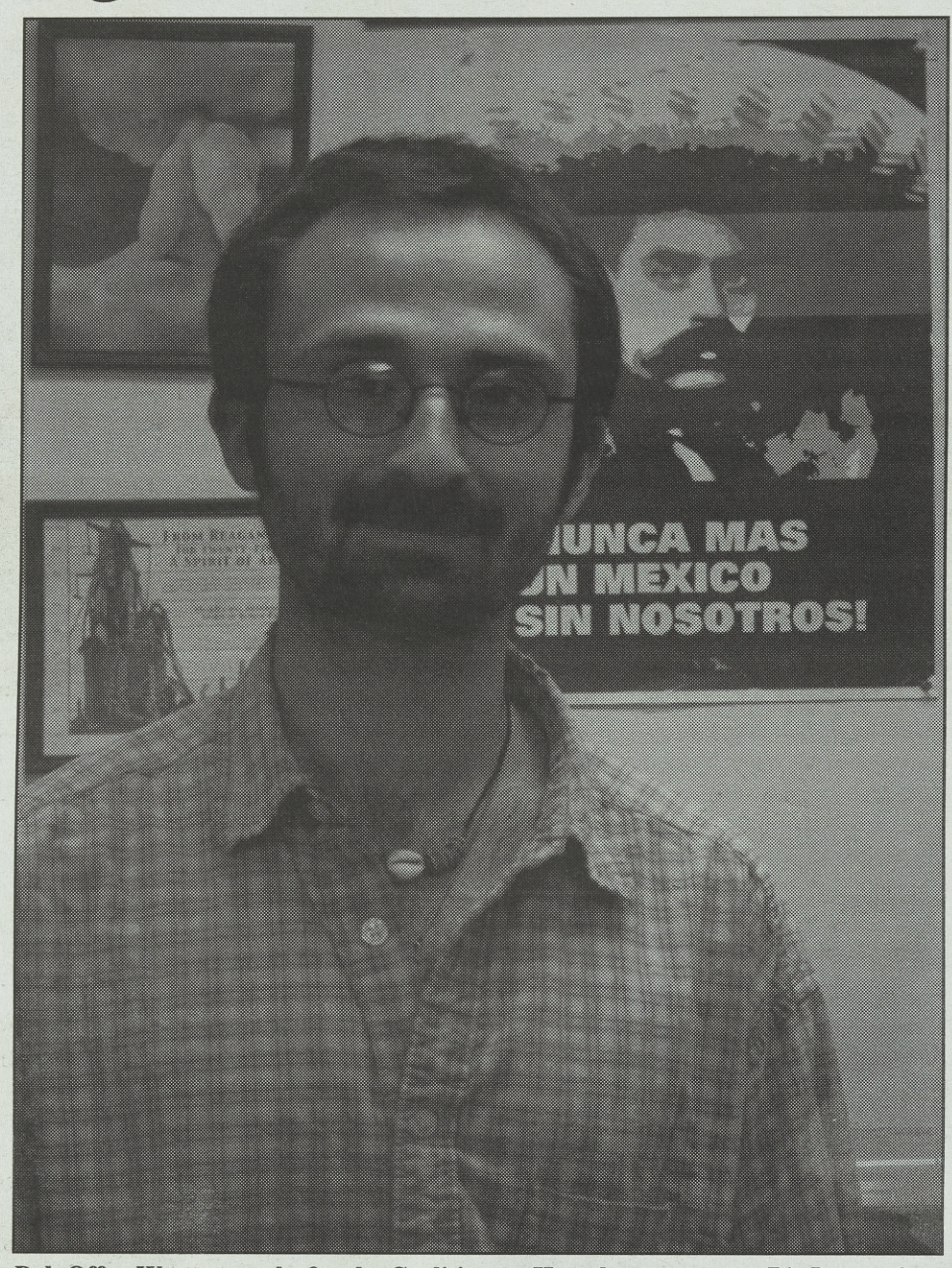
The Coalition on Homelessness has been documenting arrests and citations related to homelessness and its strong advocacy work has not always been appreciated by City Hall.

Paul Boden, the Coalition's founding director and now executive director of the Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP), remembers such adversity between the Coalition and politicians dating back to when Art Agnos was mayor during the 1980s.

According to Boden, being an advocate means standing up for an issue when it is least popular.

"As a true group trying to create change, you have to sacrifice popularity or access with the mayor," he said. "You have to do what's right. I never worry about Bob being a poverty pimp. He's someone who could look at himself in the mirror with pride."

Bob Offer-Westort, 26, is the youngest member on staff at the Coalition. He stands lean, sports a neatly trimmed beard, and wears a flat cap resembling those of newsboys in days past. He is clad in jeans and thrift-store plaids. With his small, round eyeglasses, he looks like a grown-up version of Harry Potter.



Bob Offer-Westort works for the Coalition on Homelessness. Erin Reagan photo

Every year, Bob does an anniversary recital of Ginsberg's seminal poem,"Howl." The poem is about groups shunned *by society, and Bob feels the message resonates as much* today is it did when Ginsberg first read it in 1955 in San Francisco. He says all outsiders are represented in "Howl," including homeless people.

Bob has made a life studying cultures worldwide. He has a bachelor's degree in social anthropology from Global College at Long Island University. The school, which he described as a radical Quaker school, encourages activism locally and abroad.

He spent a year in a rural fishing village in Ghana for his thesis. He enrolled in a Cantonese class at City College of San Francisco to understand better the Chinese community. Recently, he just moved from his Lower Haight apartment to a Thai household in the Sunset district and hopes to brush up on the language skills he learned in Thailand.

This life-long study appears to be a continuation of the academic environment in which he was raised; his father taught business in universities and his mother was a librarian.

Bob also said that growing up gay in a homophobic society attuned him to poverty issues. He sees the same kind of demonizing of LGBT and homeless people at work in this society. People who describe themselves as normal deem others as disgusting.

When he moved to San Francisco, Offer-Westort held jobs at nonprofits, including a health care provider for seniors and a documentary film company. "The providers weren't really changing society," he said. "I found it frustrating."

While between jobs, he started volunteering at the Coalition on Homelessness, initially to study tenant issues affecting low-income people. He then joined a group in drafting a grievance procedure for homeless people with substance abuse and mental health issues.

"When I got there (at the Coalition), in some ways it felt like home," he said. "It felt like a comfortable place to be."

Street Sheet, the San Francisco-based street newspaper, aims to tell the homeless side of the story. Articles are written by Coalition staff, volunteers and homeless people themselves, who also distribute the paper for a $1 donation.

"There aren't too many print venues in which homeless people can get their voices heard," Offer-Westort explained. "*Street Sheet* creates an opportunity for homeless people and middle-class people to interact directly."

"Bob's understanding of the causes of homelessness is profound," said *Street Sheet* contributor Carol Harvey. "He has the skills of an extremely experienced editor."

San Francisco's cultural heritage fascinates Offer-Westort. Every year on October 7, he has been going to the former site of the Six Gallery on Fillmore and Filbert streets where Allen Ginsberg first read his seminal poem "Howl." The gallery is gone and now a bar and a furniture store stand. A pedestal with a bronze-colored plaque marks where Ginsberg read the Beat anthem.

Ginsberg's poem is about groups shunned by society, and Bob said he feels the message resonates as much today is it did when Ginsberg first read it in 1955. He says all outsiders are represented in "Howl," including homeless people.

Two other people join him in the anniversary recital. They read three times, taking turns. Most passers-by in the Marina district ignore them, and only one stops for a moment, recognizing the poem. Bob shares a flagon of pinot noir with his fellow readers. Unlike the homeless people Bob often defends, Bob and his companions are not ticketed by the police for public drinking.

Last September, several weeks before Bob's reading of "Howl," the Coalition held a benefit at the SOMArts Gallery, in honor of the Coalition's 20th anniversary.

Offer-Westort kept a low profile, greeting people at the door and retrieving paintings to be auctioned off. The event raised about $20,000 from selling the artwork, some created by homeless artists. The annual fundraiser attempts to bridge the gap between homeless people and the general public.

"I have this hope that art can be used to change the culture," he said. Agitprop-style posters adorn his workplace. One reads: "Homelessness is not just for poor people any more." Another portrays a young boy saluting against the backdrop of an American flag: "Twenty percent of the homeless people in the U.S. are Vietnam veterans," the poster says.

Bob sees homelessness as a global issue, not just a local one. He contrasts how it's approached in the Ghanaian city of Kumasi and San Francisco. Even though it's about the same size as San Francisco, Kumasi has fewer homeless people, and their condition is less severe.

Mostly, homelessness in Kumasi is temporary, not chronic. A Ghanaian fallen on hard times would likely be given a plot of farmland and a place to stay. The down-on-his-luck San Franciscan usually has no place to return.

"(We need) to have some cultural changes," he said. "Not just about homelessness, but about economic justice."

The solution to ending homelessness is simple, he said: "Provide affordable, adequate housing — it's far and away the biggest step."

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The Life and Death of a Homeless Man in Oakland

"People are obsessed with possessions and commerce. In the meantime we jettison everything that's important, which is taking care of each other." — Pete Brady, Oakland merchant

by Maureen Hartmann

John Johnson, a homeless man living in Oakland, died in front of Domino's Pizza in the neighborhood of the Grand Lake Theater on December 9, 2007. His funeral was held at St. Mary's in Oakland on Tuesday, January 8.

John was born on December 30, 1958. He didn't quite live until his 49th birthday. Many homeless people die far earlier than the average life expectancy of U.S. citizens.

On the night of his death, John was with a homeless married couple that remained with him and clung to him, according to the couple, through his death in front of Domino's Pizza.

Unlike Gilbert Estrada, a homeless man who died in the middle of the night near St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Berkeley, John Johnson did not die alone. [The body of Gilbert Estrada was found on October 23, 2006. *Street Spirit* reported on his death in the November and December 2006 issues.]

Pete Brady, owner of the Grand Lake Smoke Shop right next to the Grand Lake Theater, recalled that he used to look out and see John in the neighborhood. He noted that he still looked for John's figure against the Oakland background in the month after John's death.

The cause of John's death is still undetermined. According to the verbal grapevine in the Grand Avenue neighborhood, he died of a massive heart attack. But his friends who were with him think it was a bout with pneumonia.

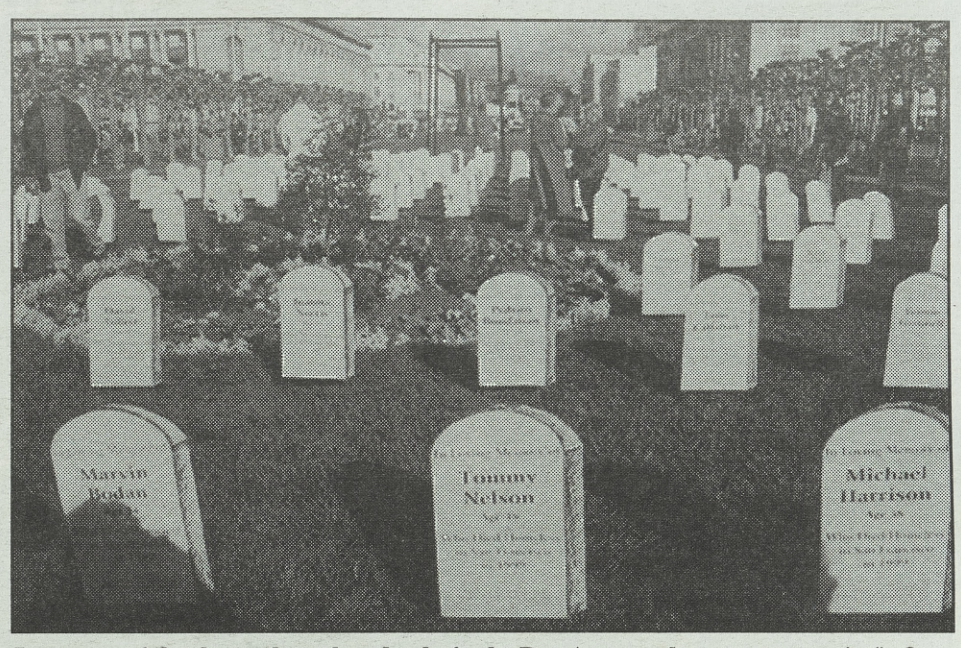
There is much with which to be comforted about John's final destiny, even though he had a heavy drinking problem. He often came to the daily Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church on Lakeshore Avenue near MacArthur and Grand Avenue. According to testimonies at his funeral, he was baptized at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish when he was in second grade. He slept in the courtyard of the church.

In terms of his character, despite the problems with alcohol, John was a very gentle, polite person, according to Brady.

He was never rude or aggressive in asking for money. He would answer a refusal with, "Thank you anyway" or "God bless you!"

Brady noted that he knew John from the time both boys were between the ages of five and seven. His family became neighbors of Johnson's family in 1963. Brady's sometime babysitter lived right next door to Johnson's home.

The smoke shop owner noted that John came from an apparently happy family.



In a memorial to honor homeless deaths in the Bay Area, each gravestone bears the name of a person who suffered and died on the street. Lydia Gans photo

Pete Brady, owner of the Grand Lake Smoke Shop next to the Grand Lake Theater, recalled that he used to look out and see John Johnson in the neighborhood. He found that he still kept looking for John's figure against the Oakland background in the month after John's death.

Brady said he thought there were four siblings in the family, and John was the caboose child, the baby of the family. At the time the boys knew each other, John's siblings had already left home, possibly gone away to college. The family was middle class on the economic scale.

Brady said he did not know for sure how his friend had become homeless. He first saw John with a drinking problem on Grand Avenue, 12 to 15 years ago, when they were both adults.

During this period, Brady tried to get help for John with his alcoholism. "He just would not commit to anything," he said.

During an interview, Brady reflected about the meaning of John Johnson's life and death as a homeless man.

Brady said, "People are obsessed with possessions and commerce. In the meantime we jettison everything that's important, which is taking care of each other. Greed is like a human disease. Animals are not greedy; they take what they need."

As a businessman in the Grand Lake neighborhood, Brady has heard his share of complaints about homeless people, but he speaks out for greater tolerance of the destitute in our midst.

"I wear two hats," he said. "I'm a merchant (as well as a friend of John's.) So I go to these neighborhood meetings with other merchants. And they end up complaining, 'Oh the homeless!' And I raised hell! Why are you guys down on him? He can't help his circumstances."

I attended the funeral of John Johnson in St. Mary's cemetery, at 12:30 p.m., on Tuesday, January 8. The service was attended by 30 or 40 people, mostly relatives. John was buried in a vault in the room with a beautiful wooden statue of the resurrected Jesus. The service, conducted by one of John's older brothers, began with a moment of silent prayer, and then other *people, mostly John's kin, gave testimony.*

The Man on the Street Corner

Something is wrong with America when people are allowed to end up on a street corner every morning with a sign, and voices in their head, and the chill of sleeping outside still in them.

by Joanna Bragen

Every morning on the way to my program in Concord, my husband and I pass a man on the corner of the off-ramp. He has the typical look —weary, worried, downtrodden and somewhat belligerent to be in such a position.

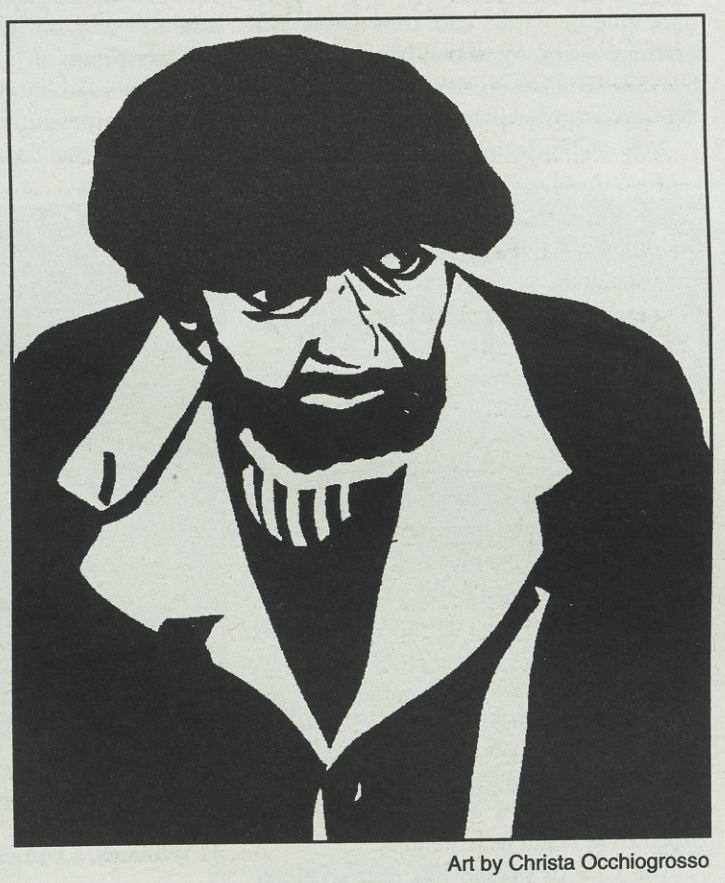
He also looks very sad and angry. He has the sign that everyone standing at the corner does: "Homeless, Please Help!"

Occasionally, he is yelling at no one. My thought, being manic-depressive myself, is that he may have mental health issues and could be yelling at the voices he hears. Sometimes he is so mad at them, he takes off and walks across the busy traffic on the major road that passes by there. It scares me, and I worry that he will get hit some day.

So what do I do about this man? That is my question every morning. I feel sad, guilty that I have it so much better. I feel like I wish I could call someone to help him; but there is no one except the police. And that would get him another "begging" citation like we witnessed him getting one day. Or, he would get a 5150 to the psychiatric hospital, which is no great place to be, but might possibly help him.

So the question is, how does one person help the guy on the street corner with the sign? A dollar or some change? Or a look, like, "I hope you feel better soon."

Maybe the best thing I can do for him is pray for him from time to time. Does feeling awful constitute enough? And am I the only one? Probably not. Where is the help? One night at a shelter? A shower and breakfast?



Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

I haven't ever been homeless so I don't know what is the best help. I just know that when I am at that street corner every morning, I feel awful and really helpless, worried for him, and sad. Maybe that's what I can do, care about this man even though he won't know.

All I can say is that something is really wrong with America when people are allowed to get so far down on their luck that they end up on a street corner every morning with a sign, and voices in their head, and the chill of sleeping outside still in them. And they just are asking for a dollar, but what they need is a home and some food and clothing.

He needs a whole nation and a government who cares about this one man on the street corner. And not just a single person, seeing him every day, worrying about him and wondering, will he make it through until tomorrow?

Street Spirit

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Death of Homeless Woman Cries Out for Justice

Sherri Williams was a well-known homeless activist in Fresno. She was disabled and in need of medical care, but she died just after being dumped from a hospital to sleep on a dirt field.

by Al Williams

My wife, Sherri Williams, passed away on December 20, 2007, at 11:51 a.m., while homeless in the city of Fresno. It is my opinion, and the opinion of others concerned, that she died a needless death, at the very young age of 45, because of inadequate health care, especially for homeless people.

This problem of inadequate health care must be fixed now. I don't mean hire some firm for $150,000 or more to study the problem; I mean it's time to GET-ER-DONE, now. We the homeless, the displaced, the poor, are sick and tired of being sick and tired.

I, among others, blame local government, starting at the top, with Fresno Mayor Alan Autry, the Fresno City Council, their hired buddies — and please don't leave out the Rescue Mission and its director, Larry Arce, and lately the Poverello House.

Let me explain what happened, starting with inadequate health care. Community Hospital receives $20,000,000 a year, if not more from other donations, to provide adequate health care for the homeless, the displaced and the poor. So why are people such as Sherri Williams, who was homeless the last two years of her life, handicapped, confined to a wheelchair and in declining health, refused medical care, *which resulted in her death?*

On Sherri's previous three visits to Community Hospital, a few doctors attempted to get her into surgery. But the big bosses at Community Hospital, who tell doctors what they can and cannot do, and who will live and who will die, refused to grant Sherri the surgery she needed to save her life.



Sherri Williams, a disabled homeless woman in a wheelchair, was thrown out of a McDonald's and arrested for attempting to use the bathroom on July 7, 2007. Then, in December 2007, a hospital dumped Sherri onto the street and she died soon after.

What they did was discharge Sherri, with an open wound (a prolapsed rectum), into an open dirt field, with no shelter except a sleeping bag. And yes, she became ill once again, with an infection in her intestine which could have been repaired had the proper surgery been done.

Now Sherri is no longer with us. I ask: Don't doctors take an oath to save lives? And if so, why are there hospital supervisors ordering doctors to go against this oath? *Personally, I feel that it is time to* replace some of the supervisors, period.

Does the mighty dollar override human life? That is not the oath of a doctor. So, what are we going to do? I say, GET UP, STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS. Let us not have any more needless deaths.

Next on the hit list. The City of Fresno, along with the poverty pimps, such as the Rescue Mission, the Poverello House, Naomi House, and a large portion of the recipients of government funds given to Fresno. Government funding has made homelessness a profit-making business.

We wished Sherri Williams a safe journey on her continued travels, and put together a memorial for her at Roeding Park that was second to none. It goes to show that homeless people are a responsible group and can produce excellent events when necessary.

My point is that it is time for the homeless to take charge of our own destiny. We can and will do it. It's time to fire the poverty pimps. It's time to say to them: "We refuse to let you turn homelessness into a business for personal profit! We refuse to let that happen!"

Therefore, starting on February 16 at 2:00 p.m. at Roeding Park, after the meal served by Food Not Bombs, we will hold a weekly workshop to end homelessness now, not in ten years. All interested people, homeless and otherwise, are invited, especially homeless advocates.

At this time I would like to extend a special Thank You to the following individuals on behalf of Sherri Williams: Pam Whalen, Simone Whalen-Rhodes and Mike Rhodes, Alvin Valeriano, Kelly and Tina B., Jean Chipp, Tom Machado, Rev. Floyd Harris, David Alverez and family, and Food Not Bombs. And from the bottom of our hearts, a very special Thank You to Elizabeth Kucinich, for her attentive, compassionate visit to Sherri on December 1. Thank you so very much!

Homeless Policy in Fresno— A Kinder and Gentler Plan?

by Mike Rhodes

A new policy, one that will treat homeless people with more dignity and respect, is being considered by elected officials from the City and County of Fresno.

These changes, if they are approved, are expected to include converting unused buildings in the downtown area into affordable housing for homeless people.

This new policy would be a significant and strategic shift from previous policies that included bulldozing homeless encampments, criminalizing the homeless and forcing people into unheated tool sheds.

Advocates of this new policy say that providing decent affordable housing to homeless people is part of a national trend that is making the social service/shelter model (like Fresno's Rescue Mission and Poverello House) obsolete. Yet, there are powerful economic interests and harsh realities driving this change of policy.

By every objective measurement, the homelessness policies pursued by Fresno officials up to this point have been failures. The police and other city agencies were simply not able to eliminate homeless people in Fresno by harassing them, and by making their lives so miserable that they left town, got off the streets or died.

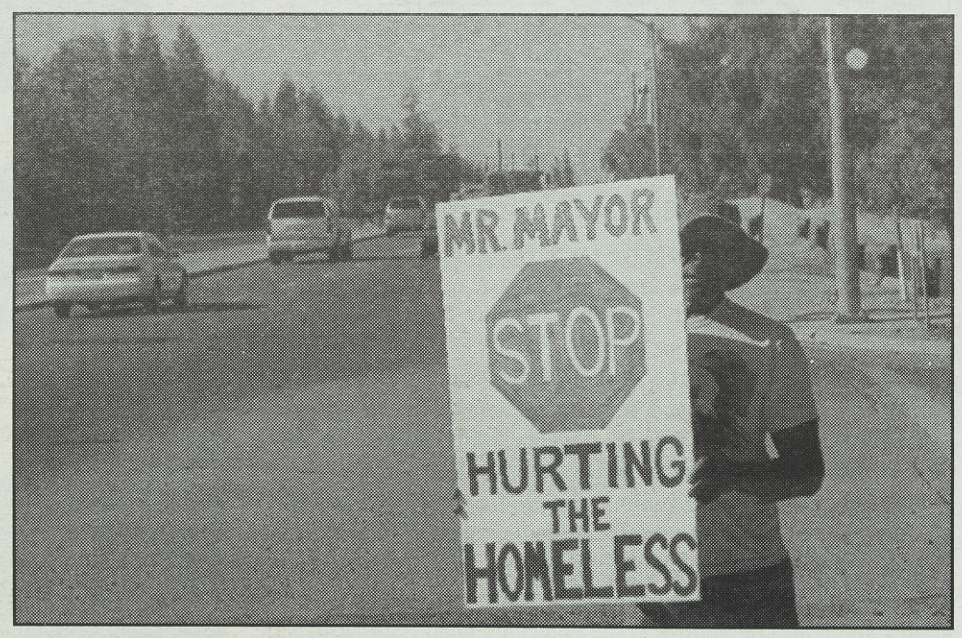
It was not for lack of trying that these draconian anti-homeless policies failed. In the end, the result has been increased homelessness and a more visible homeless population than when the policies began.

Fresno's policy of bulldozing homeless encampments led to a lawsuit that forced city officials to stop taking and immediately destroying homeless people's property. It got so bad that in November 2006, Fresno officials had to be reminded by a federal judge to uphold the Constitution of the United States. A trial in that case is expected to begin next summer.

The City of Fresno has also received nationwide attention critical of its ruthless policies against the homeless.

In the end, it does not appear that Fresno officials' recent steps to change public policy came about solely because of the pressure created by negative publicity, the actions of homeless advocates, or the lawsuit filed by homeless people.

While those actions played a role, the tipping point seems to have come as a result of the economic redevelopment in the downtown area led by Forest City Enterprises Inc. Forest City has exclusive rights to redevelop the southern section of downtown Fresno and plans to carry out this development in three phases.



Al Williams, a homeless man, has a message for the Fresno mayor. Mike Rhodes photo

Without a solution to the massive number of homeless people in that section of downtown, Forest City simply would not move ahead with redevelopment.

It is in this context that the City of Fresno's elected officials asked the Board of Supervisors to discuss the issue of homelessness. City officials believe that a partnership with the County is a critical component in bringing in outside funding.

A rare meeting between city and county officials finally took place on December 7, 2007. This meeting included Fresno Mayor Alan Autry, all Fresno City Council members, all but one member of the Board of Supervisors, and the director of the Bush administration's Interagency Council on Homelessness, Philip Mangano.

Mangano presented the Housing First model that seeks to provide decent and affordable housing to homeless people. He said that providing housing for the homeless is less expensive than the current "shelter model" used in cities like Fresno, adding that it has better success at reducing homelessness.

Mangano cited a study in San Diego where "after they had expended three mil-

See **Kinder, Gentler Plan?** *page 5*

A Closer Look at Federal Official's Ten Year Plans

"Ten Year Plans" to end homelessness are ten year shams. What the plans obscure is the need for universal health care, a massive commitment to public housing by the federal government and a living wage.

by Jeremy Alderson

Krishnamurti, the Indian anti-guru, used to tell a story about the day the devil and a friend were out walking and saw a man pick up a piece of truth.

"That's bad for you," said the friend.

"No, it's not," answered the devil. "I'm going to help him organize it."

So it is with Housing First, the effort to end chronic homelessness promoted by the Bush administration's Philip Mangano, director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness.

On the face of it, there's nothing wrong with Housing First. But then again, there was nothing wrong with telling kids to just say no to drugs. It was just wrong to use that campaign as a cover for militarily terrorizing Latin America, moving massive amounts of cocaine into America's inner cities and cutting back on drug treatment.

There's nothing wrong, for that matter, with informing kids that abstinence is the safest sex for physical (though not necessarily mental) health, but it was wrong to use that campaign as the fetishistic happy face of a broad-based assault on reproductive rights. And there's nothing wrong with a president fulfilling his oath of office to defend the United States, but it's wrong to claim you're defending the country when you're really launching a war of aggression based on lies.

So it should come as no surprise that, in the hands of our current crop of would-be tyrants, the Housing First model has become no more virtuous in practice than any of these other fine ideas.

Yes, of course, homeless advocates, myself included, are for housing first, because when you get people into houses they're not homeless anymore, and isn't that the point? But before we go signing loyalty oaths to the praise police, let's just ask one little question.

If we are to believe that the Housing First model, as it's now put forward, represents the heartfelt cry of huddled masses yearning to breathe free and not the guttural chant of corporate voodoo priests, on what date, exactly, will all the homeless people be in houses and why are we supposed to believe it?

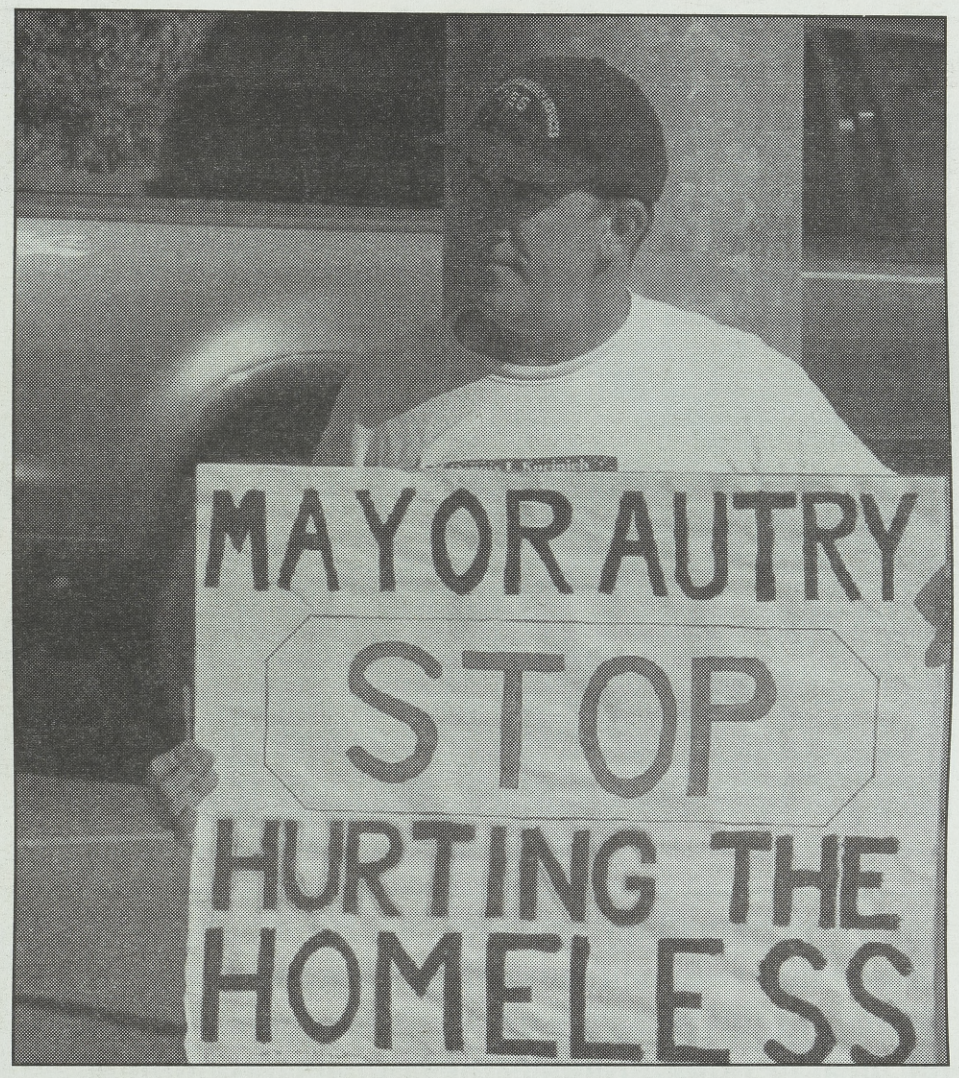
Okay, it's a two-part question, but the answers are "never" and "we're not."

I welcome anyone who can prove me wrong. Seriously. Just show me the evidence and I'll print a complete retraction.

But from everything I've seen up until now, the Housing First model is being waved at us today by people who — no matter what incidental good they might do — have no plan whatsoever for solving the housing crisis.

The centerpiece initiative of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, the celebrated "Ten Year Plans" to end homelessness are ten year shams, because nobody knows how many homeless people there'll really be in ten years. Didn't we just see more than a million people become homeless overnight with Katrina? Aren't economists saying the sub-prime mortgage melt-down is likely to drive us into a deep recession?

What these plans obscure is the need for universal health care, a massive commitment to public housing on the part of the federal government, and a universal living wage, just to name three little things.



A protest of Fresno Mayor Alan Autry's attacks on the homeless. Mike Rhodes photo

Where "Housing First" fits today is in a system that Paul Boden, head of the Western Regional Advocacy Project, describes as "women and children last."

Yes, the Bush initiatives are helping some homeless people get off the streets. But it's just part of a snow job. The homeless people being helped are the ones who are literally bad for business, because their unsightly carcasses (again, sometimes literally) can cost the tourist and retail sectors.

Meanwhile, programs that treat crack-addicted pregnant women — programs that probably save money, because of how effectively they can eliminate platinum-plated neonatal intensive care — are seeing cutbacks. This is no coincidence. Did anyone ever hear of low birth-weight babies driving shoppers away?

So let's talk about Fresno, but anyone reading these words can plug in the name of any other town in the United States. On what day will proposed Housing First programs end homelessness in Fresno and why are we supposed to believe it? Are they claiming they'll build enough housing units for everybody who needs one, and if so, on what basis do they make that claim?

I believe that no one can satisfactorily answer these questions, because the peo*ple in power aren't implementing real* solutions, and the people who would implement real solutions aren't in power. So let's save our cheering for the day when all our brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, and sons and daughters are housed.

A Kinder, Gentler Plan?

from page 4

lion dollars on 15 people at the end of 18 months, those same 15 people were in the same condition and situation that they were at the beginning of the 18 months. They were on the same streets, the same street corners, same doorways and more importantly ready to randomly ricochet through those very expensive systems once again."

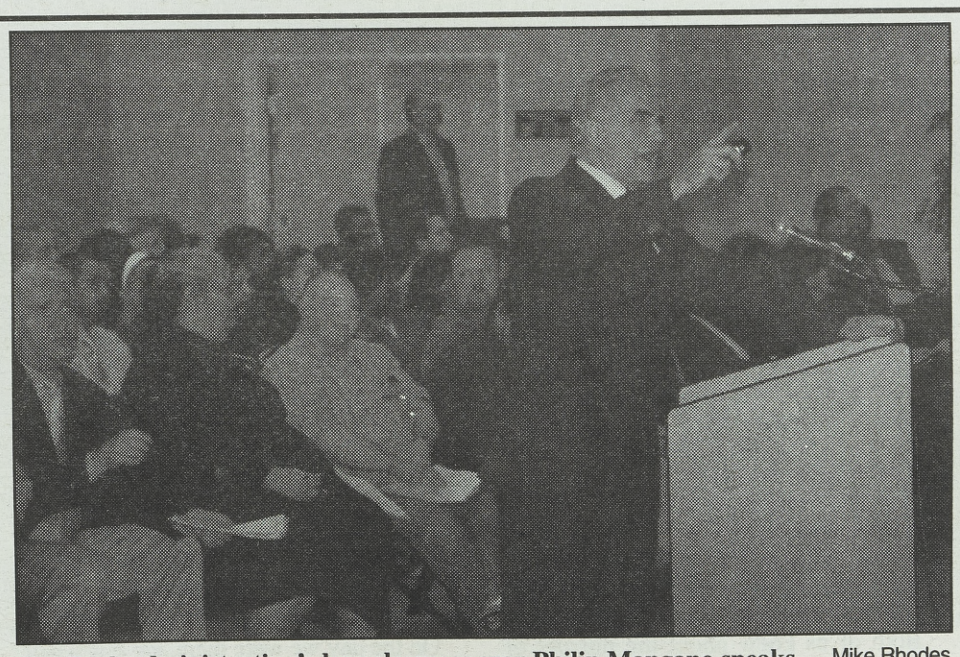
Mangano said that the City of San Diego could have provided these homeless people with luxury condos on beachfront property and spent less money.

The reason, according to Mangano, that it is so expensive to maintain the current system is that city and county officials have to pay for emergency medical services, police, sanitation, food, shelter, and other services for homeless people.

He said that "by providing them with permanent supportive housing you can actually achieve cost savings."

The cost/benefit analysis was clearly a major selling point for the Housing First program and Mangano returned to that theme time and again.

He said, "In the cost studies that have been done around the country, the range of chronically homeless people going through those expensive health and law enforcement systems ranges from $35,000 to $150,000 per year per person. The cost of providing housing, a room, or an efficiency apartment with support services is between $13,000 to $25,000.



The Bush administration's homelessness czar Philip Mangano speaks to Fresno officials about the Ten Year plan to eliminate homelessness. Mike Rhodes photo

"So, for public policy makers, the choice is an obvious one. We can pay a lot to have people continue to be homeless and randomly ricocheting through expensive systems, or we can pay much less to actually solve the problem by providing permanent and supportive housing."

In a warning to local elected officials, Mangano quoted Albert Einstein as saying "the very definition of insanity was doing the same thing over and over and over again, expecting a different result."

Mangano said that quote by Einstein "characterizes what we did with homelessness for 20 years. Now we are choosing in this country a Ten Year Plan to do things in a completely different way and to frame the effort in a business frame."

Mangano said, "Portland, Oregon, has had a 70 percent decrease in chronic homelessness in the three years they have been implementing their ten year plan."

Portland was on the mind of Fresno City Councilmember Larry Westerlund when he talked to me about this new direction in homeless policy. Westerlund spoke highly of Portland's Central City Concern project that has revitalized downtown with housing for the homeless and social services to address their many needs. He said he would like to see Fresno do something similar.

Housing First is essentially a plan to get chronically homeless people off the streets and into decent housing. After their housing situation is stabilized, they are provided with the opportunity to address the issues that led to homelessness in the first place.

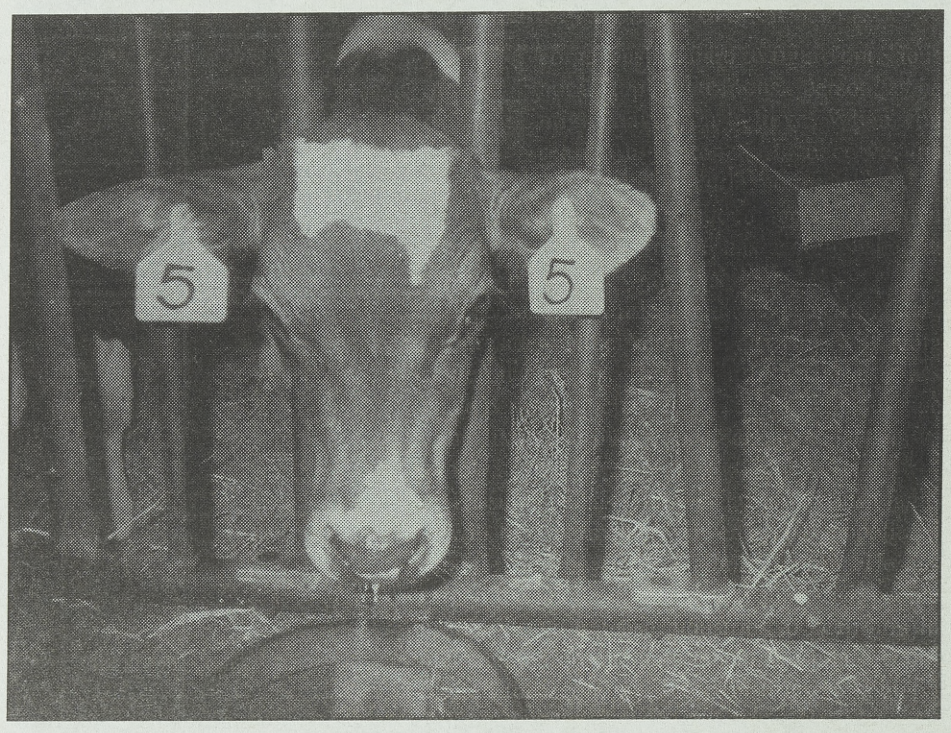
That could mean getting job training, mental health services, or help in addressing drug or alcohol addiction. Housing First is an integrated program that first provides a homeless person with a decent place to live and then helps them improve the quality of their life by offering social services.

At the conclusion of the public hearing, both the City Council and Board of Supervisors passed a resolution in support of the development of a Ten Year Plan. Both bodies agreed to direct staff to bring together with the various stakeholders on the homelessness issue and begin this work in early January 2008.

If successful, the new city/county plan will accomplish multiple goals. Forest City will proceed with the mixed-use redevelopment of downtown, older unused buildings will be converted into housing for the homeless, and people who are homeless will be housed and treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

For articles about the struggle for civil liberties for homeless people in Fresno, see: http://www.fresnoalliance.com/home/homelessness.htm

Franciscan Values and Compassion for Animals



A male calf is tagged, numbered and penned up at St. Anthony Farm. Joan Clair photo



A statue of St. Francis of Assisi sculpted by Harriet Moore. St. Francis embraced animals as brothers and sisters, prayed for the birds, and taught reverence for all forms of life. Melody Montminy photo

The Farm Sanctuary provides care for hundreds of abused and rescued farm animals yearly. None of the animals in this program are ever slaughtered or bred for meat or other products for human consumption.

by Joan Clair, M.Div.

"Every bird a word, every word a bird, and bird song is not made by machines. Poetry is... all the birds of the universe flocking together for a congress of birds and singing singly."

— Lawrence Ferlinghetti

St. Anthony Foundation is a Franciscan organization which, according to its literature, is guided by Franciscan values. St. Francis treated all living creatures with reverence, so that modern environmentalists have cited him as the patron saint of animals, birds and the environment.

One can imagine an animal refuge or sanctuary created in the name of Francis of Assisi, but the treatment of animals confined to a farm — and the inhumane manner in which their lives are ended — raise troubling questions.

Franciscan values include these words from the Earlier Rule (circa 1221), as quoted in *Francis and Clare, The Complete Works* (translated by Regis J. Armstrong, O.F.M.): *"You have created all things spiritual and corporeal, having made us in Your own image and likeness, You placed us in paradise."* [Chapter XXIII, p. 130]

In other words, not only humans were created "in the image of God," but all creatures. And as a result, all creatures are to be treated with compassion and respect. St. Francis exemplified this spirit.

Francis of Assisi prayed while holding a waterfowl, released a pheasant that was given to him for food, and even removed little worms from the road.

According to Edward A. Armstrong, the author of *Saint Francis: Nature Mystic,* the Franciscan Order was founded as "a movement that cared for people and animals as individuals... for godliness implies being truly humane" [p. 109].

This emphasis on individuality is very important in Franciscan spirituality. The basis of all prejudice is lumping individuals into groups and then, based on their real or imagined group membership, assigning value judgments to the group's members.

St. Anthony Foundation provides food and support services to homeless people in San Francisco and also operates a farm in Petaluma, California. St. Anthony Foundation has done a very good job of recognizing the value of individual humans, especially those who are poor, homeless, elderly, and victims of substance abuse.

It has established many compassionate programs to help impoverished people, and St. Anthony Foundation treats them as individuals worthy of respect, and not as throw-aways or expendable.

Not so with the animals. The vision of St. Francis in regard to the nonhuman creation is yet to be realized. According to Armstrong in *Saint Francis: Nature Mystic,* the example of St. Francis and his compassion for all creatures "was shamefully neglected as controversies developed within the (Franciscan) Order" [p. 7].

This neglect is now evident in St. Anthony Foundation's "Statement of Advocacy" in which there is no indication that animals and the nonhuman creation are included as a "group understood to be disadvantaged or denied justice in society."

At St. Anthony Farm in Petaluma, men who are in alcohol and drug recovery programs, many of whom were formerly homeless, work with cows in an organic dairy where the cows' milk is sold commercially to Clover-Stornetta.

As Howard Lyman, a former dairy farmer and fourth-generation agriculturist from Montana, said, "There is very little involved in animal production that Francis of Assisi would have endorsed."

Last summer, on the occasion of St. Anthony's annual "Farm Day" open house, held on July 15, I went up to Petaluma with Bob Linden, host of "Go Vegan," a national radio show, to visit. I had never been to an organic dairy farm, nor had Linden. We wanted to see for ourselves what one was like.

Both of us knew about the horrors of factory farms where most milking cows and cattle used for beef live short and miserable lives. We hoped for much better at St. Anthony Farm, and were disappointed.

Organic, we discovered, is not the same as humane, even though Clover-Stornetta, the company to which St. Anthony Farm sells its milk, sports a humane label on its products. We will inquire into the meaning of this label later.

While the dairy cows and female calves we saw at St. Anthony Farm are treated far better than they would be in a factory farm — allowed to graze on pasture land, fed quality food, and given room in their pens and stalls to move around — insofar as they are still regarded as units of production, rather than as individuals with a spiritual as well as a corporeal nature, their treatment does not exemplify Franciscan principles.

For example, all calves are separated from their mothers within a few days. Depending on temperament, this causes anguish for the mothers and their babies. The male calves (bulls) are sold almost immediately for eventual slaughter (a process which can include raising them for veal in the infamous veal crates in which they live without light, and with no room to turn around).

The female calves are isolated from their mothers in small fiberglass pens. On the day we visited, they were covered with flies. We were told nothing could be done about the flies because the farm was organic. Eventually, the isolated female calves are allowed to join other female calves in larger holding pens and then become a part of the herd. In the meantime, they are given numbers (not names) on tags attached to their ears.

Staff members and residents gave us reasons why the calves had to be separated from their mothers and each other in terms of productivity and economy. However, none of these reasons has anything to do with the well-being of the mother cows and their babies in their corporeal or spiritual nature as cows.

They are more comfortable than units of production in factory farms, but their care still centers around commerce. And the tearing away of calves from their mothers, in particular the male calves, is as cruel as the tearing away and separation of human children from their parents.

On the day we were there, we saw a calf in one of the larger pens with number 5 tags on his ears. We were told this was a male calf whose life had been spared because of his unusual color. Two days later, I read an obituary about Natalia Karp, a concert pianist who was spared from execution during the Holocaust after playing for the commandant of a Nazi concentration camp. [*West County Times,* July 17, 2007.]

The separation of calves from mothers can present a dilemma for formerly homeless and destitute residents of the farm who are working with the cows, presumably as a part of their recovery program.

One resident who had left the program, and was visiting the farm the same day we were, told us that it was hard for him at first to separate the mothers from their babies, but he got used to it. It was just part of the "process."

This minimizing of, or getting accustomed to, the suffering which one creates for another creature does not reflect Franciscan values. Nor does it sound particularly therapeutic or healing for human beings in recovery — individuals who have suffered themselves as outcasts, in one manner or another — to be instruments in causing the suffering of other creatures, or to be involved in a process which denies this suffering.

Often, people who have suffered themselves can be capable of more compassion than those whose lives have been sheltered. Yet how can compassion be demonstrated in this context?

According to Jim Kehoe, dairy manager at St. Anthony Farm, many of the dairy cows at the farm are artificially inseminated. Then, at the end of their productive years, when the female cows can no longer give milk, they are sold to be slaughtered for their meat.

Dave Minar, a co-owner of Cedar Summit Dairy, an organic dairy farm in New Prague, Minnesota, said the cows do not feel pain, but they do not like to be restrained and tampered with in the artificial insemination process. They don't have these negative reactions when a bull mounts them, he said. Bob Linden bluntly calls the artificial insemination process "rape."

As far as being "retired to pasture," this is not an option for the cows at St. Anthony Farm, who have spent most of their adult lives giving milk for the use of humans. Currently, in the United States, I am aware of only one organic dairy farm that does retire cows to pasture, and that is Radiance Dairy in Fairfield, Iowa. Cows elsewhere are "retired" to the horrors of the slaughterhouse.

St. Anthony Farm sells its milk to Clover-Stornetta, a company which carries a "humane label" on its products, i.e., the American Humane Association's free farm label for "humanely produced dairy products." However, this label falls short in several respects. For starters, it never addresses the issue of female and male calves being separated from their mothers in violation of their natural nursing cycles.

Unlike other groups such as Certified Humane and the Animal Welfare Institute,

See **Franciscan Values** *page 14*

Keeping King's Dream Alive on the Border

Forty years after his death, Martin Luther King's lovely dream of equality for all God's children is suffering to be born in one of the poorest areas in the nation.

by Father Michael Seifert

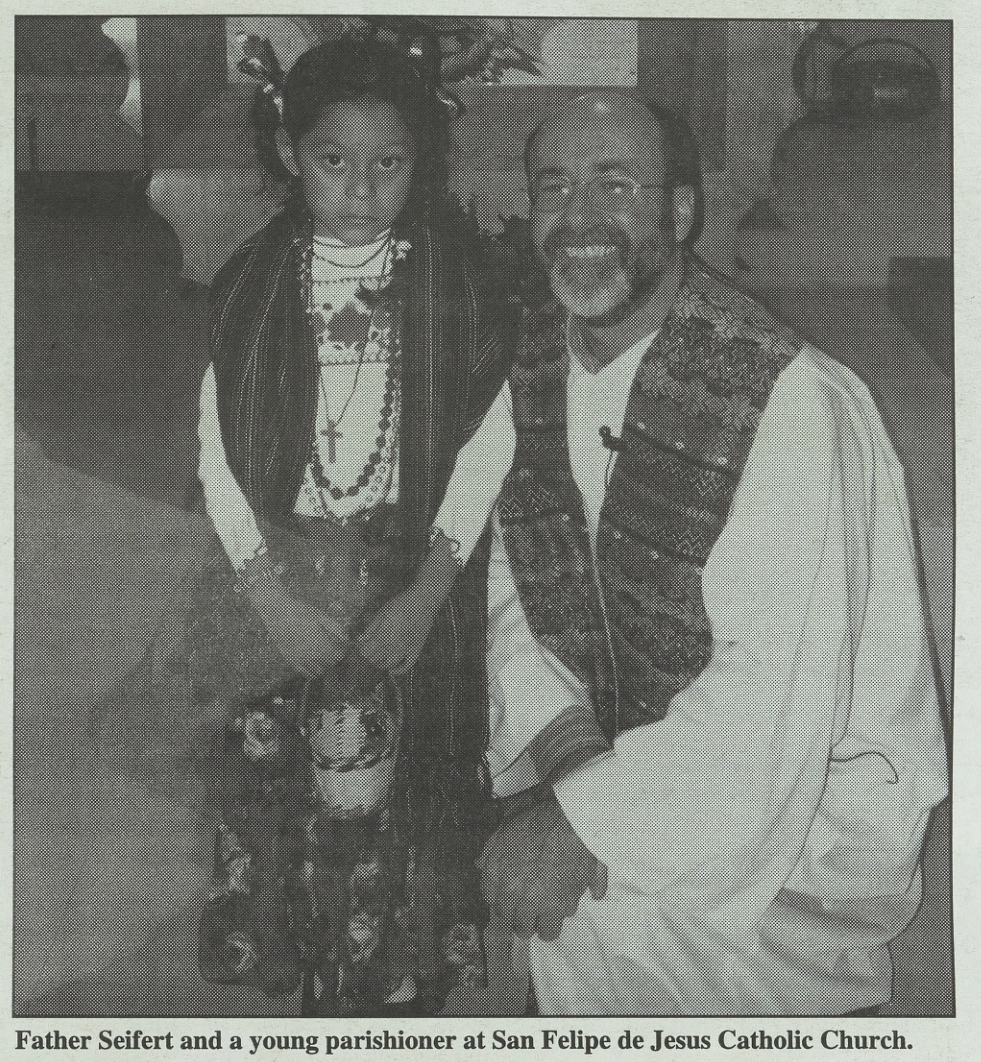
If Dr. Martin Luther King were alive today, he'd be marching in the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. Forty years after his death, it is here that his lovely dream of equality for all God's children is suffering to be born.

Dr. King rightly named poverty as a blight on the American Dream. And it would test the imagination to find an area of our country poorer than the Rio Grande Valley. We fail every social indicator of well-being: access to medical care, employment, affordable housing, and high school graduation rates.

My own community, Cameron Park, has a per capita income of $4,135 — less than that of Guatemala. Yet we live in Texas, one of the wealthiest entities in the world. Texas produces more wealth than entire nations. But Texas doesn't take care of our own.

The heartbreaker is that most of those forced to suffer the stingy misery of Texas' poverty are children.

Not long ago, I had a visit from a group of public health professionals. They had come to see me because health care is so abysmal here that my community has become a topic of exotic interest to scholars. We went for a walk, and ended up looking out over a creek that runs in front of the church. The academics took note of the cement and tarpapered shacks lining the stream. Someone was burning garbage. The stench drifted over us.



Father Seifert and a young parishioner at San Felipe de Jesus Catholic Church.

One of the visitors asked me, "Are we in the United States or in Mexico?"

I said, "This is Texas. Why do you ask?"

She said, "Because it reminds me of home."

"Where is that?" I asked her.

"Calcutta, India," she said, unsmiling.

But we aren't in India, or Guatemala, or Mexico. We are Texans. We are working Texans, men and women who work two shifts or two jobs, and then another on weekends. Salt of the earth, the Bible calls us. "El pueblo de Dios," Cesar Chavez named us.

But for all our effort, we barely pay our bills. Minimum wages cannot support a family, no matter how many jobs you manage to hold down.

We are too proud to beg, so we don't all eat the way we need to. We pray, always and fiercely, that we don't sicken, that the shadow of an accident not cross our homes. We simply cannot afford to be sick.

Despite the hardness of life here, we love the Rio Grande Valley. There is a quality of life here that is missing in San Antonio or Houston or Dallas. Here there is an intangible spirit that defies the measures of the social sciences. Some call it solidarity, others a love for the extended family. Church people call it community.

The Valley is one place in America where neighbors still unashamedly go door-to-door to ask for donations for a funeral; where no one sleeps on the streets; where no one goes without a meal, however simple that offering might be.

We consider ourselves brothers and sisters, and today's harsh anti-immigrant voices have deepened that sense of community. We especially care about our children. When President Bush vetoed the expansion of children's health coverage, the anger here was palpable.

We look forward to the 2008 elections, for many here have recently discovered the power of the vote. One after another, the presidential candidates call for "change." We in the Rio Grande Valley are ready for change.

We believe, as Dr. King said, that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." We are people of faith, hope and long-suffering love.

We understand the hard work that social change requires, and we are not afraid of that. After all, we are working people. After all, we are the legacy of Don Cesar Chavez and of Dr. Martin Luther King.

Father Michael Seifert is president of Proyecto Digna in Brownsville, Texas. Contact Father Seifert at San Felipe de Jesus Catholic Church, 2218 Carlos Ave., Brownsville, TX 78526. Phone: (956) 459-6827.

Police Only Make Problems Worse for the Homeless

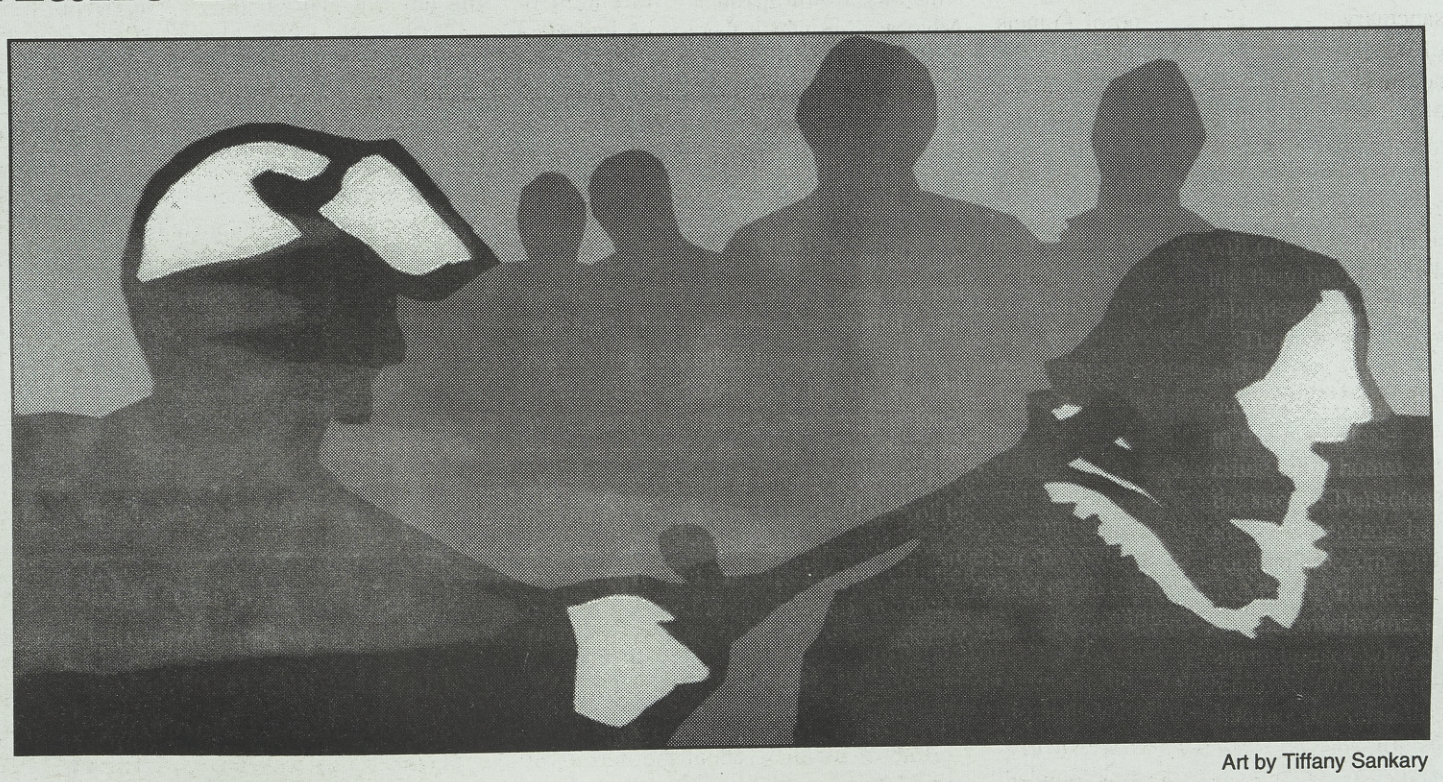
by Renee Bowen

MOVING — that's what you find yourself doing, sometimes several times a night, thanks to the endless array of cops forcing you to move, claiming you are "trespassing and loitering." The police will cite you for just being present, insisting they have "city ordinances" that prohibit people from sleeping on the streets.

Those rare few who have the privilege and luxury of a vehicle are told that "city ordinances" prohibit anyone from sleeping in their vehicles — making it a punishable crime to be homeless and forced to live on the streets. Thus commences a journey into the never-ending harassment with which cops have become so proficient.

Making matters worse are the people locked safely and securely inside their warm houses who call police to have us removed from their sight, telling police that our presence disturbs them and they feel so very threatened about our trying to get even the slightest bit of rest. Yeah, a physically challenged, homeless female is such a menacing threat that we have to have her removed by whatever means necessary, driven out of our awareness.

My experience on the streets has not been a good one and I know it's made much more challenging because I don't fit the mold. My experience has been much harsher than most because I don't receive assistance to support a drug or alcohol addiction. I'm too clean and presentable, which really seems to bother people.



Art by Tiffany Sankary

I'm very direct and straightforward in my responses. I flunked lying in school, never could get the swing of it. I receive nothing from the state at all, although I have been fighting tooth and nail since Day One for assistance, and it seems pounding my head into a brick wall would be more effective and productive.

Harassment — I've never found this in job descriptions for police or sheriff's deputies, but it must be in the "unspoken rules," just like the quotas they need to get before the end of the week is up. That's not in their job descriptions either, but that's what they do: harass those of us in unfortunate circumstances, which many of us were forced into.

Apparently, the job descriptions have changed. No longer are police out here to "protect and serve," unless constant harassment and ignorance count as protecting and serving the community. Police I encounter are always demanding my respect. Well, respect is something that is earned, not given on command. Respect through intimidation only breeds contempt.

Not a day or night has gone by in the more than seven years I've been out here that I haven't been harassed at least twice within a 24-hour period. Not a single day. I might be able to understand it if I were making trouble, but I have never done anything or hurt anyone.

Yet I'm targeted by the cops and the sheriff. No matter where I go or what city I am in, police and sheriff's deputies are right there, demanding an explanation of my presence. This is not something I understand. I go out of my way to be clean and presentable, but get nothing but the worst end of it from the police. Why can't they just leave me alone?

I can no longer stand the sight of cops. I used to really believe they were out here to help, but that is not the case, I'm finding. They've become a much bigger part of the problem. Not once since I have been out here have they helped me in any way.

Whenever I have had to make reports it has been brushed off with the remark, "What do you expect putting yourself out here?" Then the reports are shredded and ripped apart, and I'm sent on my way — making me wonder why bother to report anything, because it turns into nothing more than a waste of my time.

Young, Queer and on the Street

by Dr. Jan Steckel



"Street Kids"

Painting by Art Hazelwood

"They're just suburban kids who want to get high all the time," my friend said scornfully as we walked by the homeless teenagers on Telegraph Avenue. As a former pediatrician, I knew he was wrong. I knew lots of reasons why a teenager might find the street preferable to home.

I had examined teenagers in a juvenile detention center who had run away from abusive guardians. In a city hospital's emergency room, I had collected rape kit samples on kids who were molested by close relatives. I had seen kids in a county hospital who were raped by their grandfather or had all their limbs broken by a parent.

I had talked to middle-class teenagers in a suburban clinic who thought they would be thrown out of their homes if they told their parents they were queer. I knew, from teaching a class for physicians on caring for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) patients, that a lot of those LGBT kids were right.

LGBT teenagers are more likely to be thrown out of their homes than straight ones. That's why a report released by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) and the National Coalition on Homelessness on January 30, 2007, entitled "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Youth: an Epidemic of Homelesssness," didn't surprise me. It just made me sad.

According to the report, LGBT youth make up 20-40 percent of the homeless youth population. By contrast, youth who identify as LGBT are estimated to be 3-5 percent of youth in general.

Why are such a disproportionate number of homeless teenagers gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered, or, as many of them self-identify, "queer?" Part of the reason is that queer teens are much more likely to be rejected, and ejected, by their parents.

In one study, a quarter of gay teens who came out to their parents were thrown out of the family home. "My mother showed me the grave she buried me in. She said that I was dead to her," said Danny, a teenager quoted in the NGLTF report.

Even if an LGBT kid isn't thrown out for coming out, she or he is more likely to get kicked out for other reasons. LGBT teens are at increased risk for verbal and physical assault, are often isolated by having to be "in the closet," and suffer from a lack of positive, out role models when compared to their heterosexual peers.

Perhaps for these reasons, they are also more likely to be depressed, have substance abuse problems, or contract sexually transmitted diseases. They are two to three times more likely to commit suicide. They're even more likely than their peers to get pregnant — just one more reason for getting ejected from the family home.

Many LGBT teenagers who leave their homes gravitate to New York or San Francisco, looking for more acceptance. But they often find life in those cities harder than they had imagined.

According to a short article on the NGLTF report by Wyatt Buchanan in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, San Francisco has between 700 and 1300 homeless LGBT people between the ages of 12 and 24. Yet San Francisco currently had only 25 subsidized housing units in 2007 designated for formerly homeless LGBT youth.

As "Without Housing," the 2007 report by the Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP) details, years of federal funding cutbacks for housing have made it harder for all homeless young people to find shelter, including the LGBT ones.

Once LGBT youth are on the streets, they are more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to engage in survival sex. All the problems of LGBT youth are only exacerbated by the stresses of street living.

"Whether I'm a man with a dress and a wig, my God will love me for who I am!/ I might not walk like I'm supposed to walk./ I might not have sex with who I'm supposed to have sex with./ My God will love me for who I am!"

These lines are from a poem by Ali Forney, a transgendered homeless youth who was murdered a year after writing them, according to the NGLTF report.

LGBT homeless youth are more likely to be assaulted both in shelters and on the street. Some shelters may be dangerous for them, and in at least some places the staff can be unhelpful.

The NGLTF report notes: "At one Michigan residential placement facility, LGBT teens, or those suspected of being LGBT, were forced to wear orange jumpsuits to alert staff and other residents. At another facility, staff removed the bedroom door of an out gay youth, supposedly to ward off any homosexual behavior. The second bed in the room was left empty, with other residents warned that if they misbehaved, they would have to share the room with the 'gay kid.'"

Heather Cassell, in an article in the *Bay Area Reporter* entitled "Spotlight on Homeless LGBT Youth," mentions organizations that work with homeless LGBT young people in San Francisco. Among these are the Youth Empowerment Team at the S.F. LGBT Community Center and the Community Partnership for LGBTQQ Youth. The last two Q's in LGBTQQ stand for "Queer or Questioning."

Family Builders By Adoption recently launched a program called "No Place Like Home" which aims to provide foster homes for queer youth throughout the Bay Area. Family Builders By Adoption is currently seeking families willing to open their homes to queer youth.

The NGLTF report on LGBT Homeless Youth ends with a series of federal, state and local recommendations.

Their recommendations at the federal level include increasing appropriations for federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) programs; letting minor homeless teens get health care services without the consent of a parent or guardian; earmarking federal funds for developmental, preventive and intervention programs targeted to LGBT youth; and broadening the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition of "homeless individual" to include living arrangements common to homeless youth.

At the state and local level, the authors of the report recommend funding housing options for all homeless youth; requiring that recipients of these funds are committed to the safe and appropriate treatment of LGBT homeless youth, with penalties for non-compliance including the loss of government funding; permitting dedicated shelter space and housing for LGBT youth; repealing existing laws and policies that prevent single and partnered LGBT individuals from serving as adoptive and foster parents; discouraging the criminalization of homelessness; and expanding the availability of comprehensive health insurance and services to all low-income youth through the age of 24 via Medicaid.

My friend who said that the teenagers on Telegraph Avenue were just kids from happy suburban families who only panhandled because they want to get high all the time got a long talk that day.

He knows that until he starts donating money to the homeless, his birthday presents are going to be things like a subscription to *Street Spirit* or a copy of the WRAP report on federal housing cutbacks. Maybe tonight I'll e-mail him the 200 pages of "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Youth: an Epidemic of Homelesssness."

Queer Elements

by Mary Meriam

Fire

I feel the flames begin to singe my feet.
What devil's demons built and set this fire
to torture me with hell-born licks of heat
and burn me dead because of my desire!
The smoke grows too intense. I cannot find
my love, Samantha, weeping in the crowd.
The ashes fill my eyes. I'm going blind.
I cannot hear her now. There's only loud
deep roaring in my ears. They laugh at me
again for being queer. Then take me, death,
untie me, fire, make me, set me free.
To fire I bequeath my final breath.
My hair begins to flicker bright and hot.
I'd rather die than be someone I'm not.

Earth

I roam the parks and farmers' fields around
my parents' empty house, half-tame, half-wild,
in search of comfort that cannot be found,
a queer and quiet solitary child,
who asks the flowers, dirt, and stones for love.
In all the hours spent alone, I'm safe
and never harmed, as if someone above
the earth looks down and cares about a waif.
When sick and weary from the lack of home,
I sit and swing and hide inside the tree
whose topmost leafy branches form a dome
that falls to touch the ground. Her canopy
of soothing leaves protects me like a nest
where I can finally dream and feel at rest.

Air

My Annie plays the washboard in the square
dance band in soft and dark Vermont tonight,
my freckled summer Annie's curly hair
like strawberries in sunny garden light,
her body Rocky Mountain rugged tall,
her eyes a blue that only skiers know.
The scent of hay drifts through the open hall
on air that mingles with the music's flow,
as Annie boldly dances with her girl.
We step outside to gaze up at the sky
and watch the others circle round and twirl
their partners do-si-do. Then on the sly,
my Annie reaches shyly for my hand,
a touch that only lovers understand.

The Prophetic Art of Art Hazelwood

Art Hazelwood's riveting paintings and images expose the terrible suffering and mistreatment of poor people in our society. His artistic creations reveal the inhumanity of an unjust empire, and unmask the hidden reality of corporate abuse and governmental violence.

To see more paintings and art on the theme of social justice, visit the WRAP website at http://wraphome.org/index.html



"The Beast" Screenprint by Art Hazelwood



"Service Economy" Woodcut by Art Hazelwood



"Market Street" Painting by Art Hazelwood (oil on canvas)



"Trickle Down" Linocut by Art Hazelwood



"America—A Prophecy" Painting by Art Hazelwood (oil on canvas)

Film Documents the Battle Over Medical Marijuana

California Chronicles of Medical Marijuana

A film by Claire Burch, with editing by Christopher Sorrenti and music by Country Joe McDonald

Review by B.N. Duncan

Berkeley filmmaker Claire Burch's enlightening documentary, "California Chronicles of Medical Marijuana," presents a wide variety of Californians speaking out for the great value of medical marijuana in alleviating many forms of stress and relieving the symptoms of serious diseases.

Burch's film depicts the political and legal battles California voters have waged in their efforts to provide safe access to medical marijuana. The documentary points out that California was a pioneer in its efforts to pass a legal provision to decriminalize medical marijuana.

Although the federal government remains strongly opposed to pot, Burch's film reports on recent scientific studies reported in respected medical journals that have found new therapeutic uses for this ancient plant.

"California Chronicles of Medical Marijuana" contains the last interview with Dr. Tod Mikuriya, a courageous activist whose research and medical experience led him to champion the cause of medical marijuana. At the end of the film, Dr. Mikuriya states, "My claim to fame may be that I helped save cannabis from oblivion." He died after a long struggle with cancer on May 20, 2007.

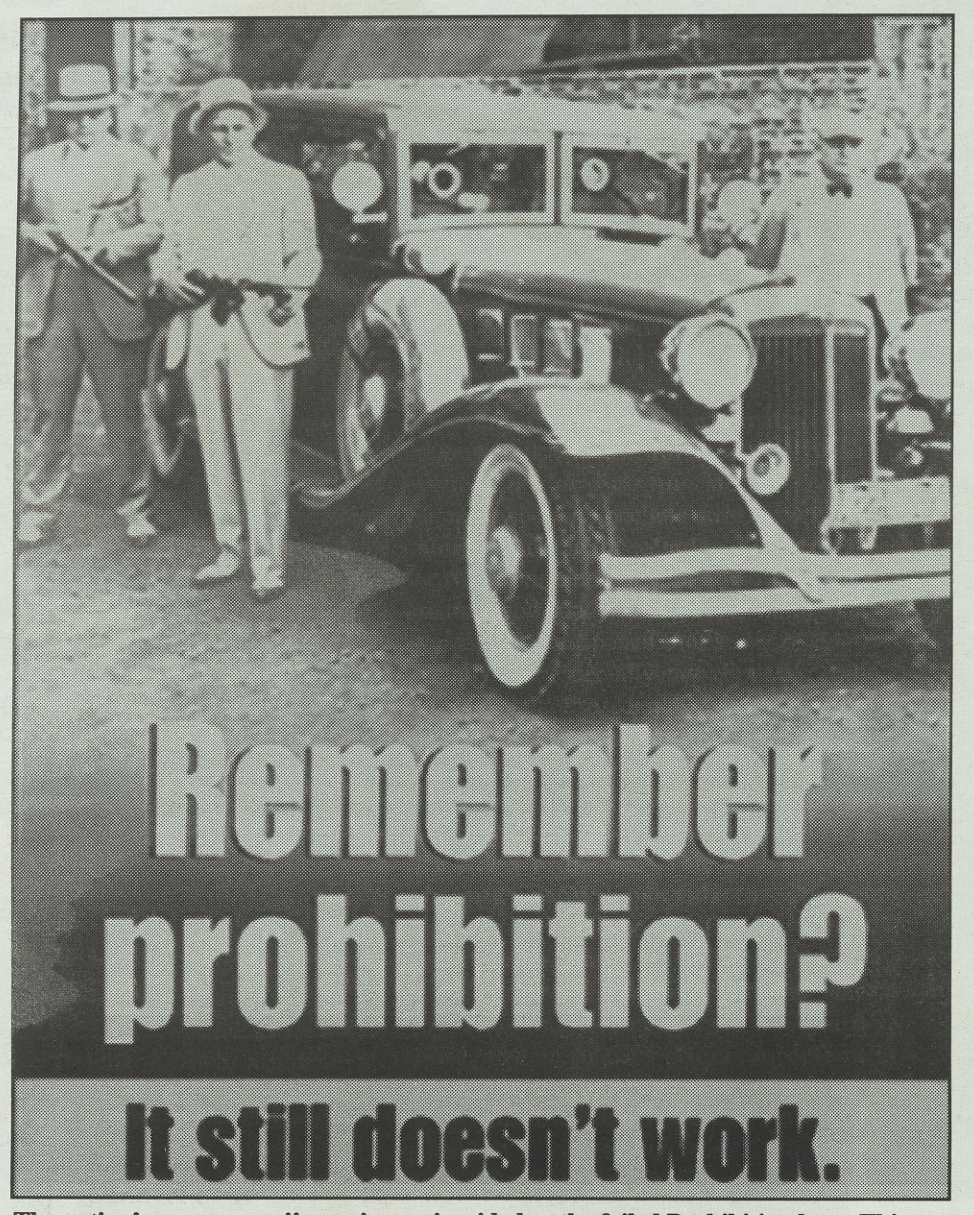
The film begins with a jolting, slam-bang speech by the legendary Brownie Mary in Berkeley's People's Park. She defends medical marijuana with all the force and fury of a fire-and-brimstone preacher. It's impossible to ignore the urgency and determination in her voice as she declares, "This war on marijuana is bullshit! Let's have medical marijuana legalized!"

This old gal seems to be someone who will keep trying to fight for a higher cause until she drops for good. In this respect, she reminds me of Claire Burch herself, who has continued in her steadfast dedication to be a voice for the marginalized.

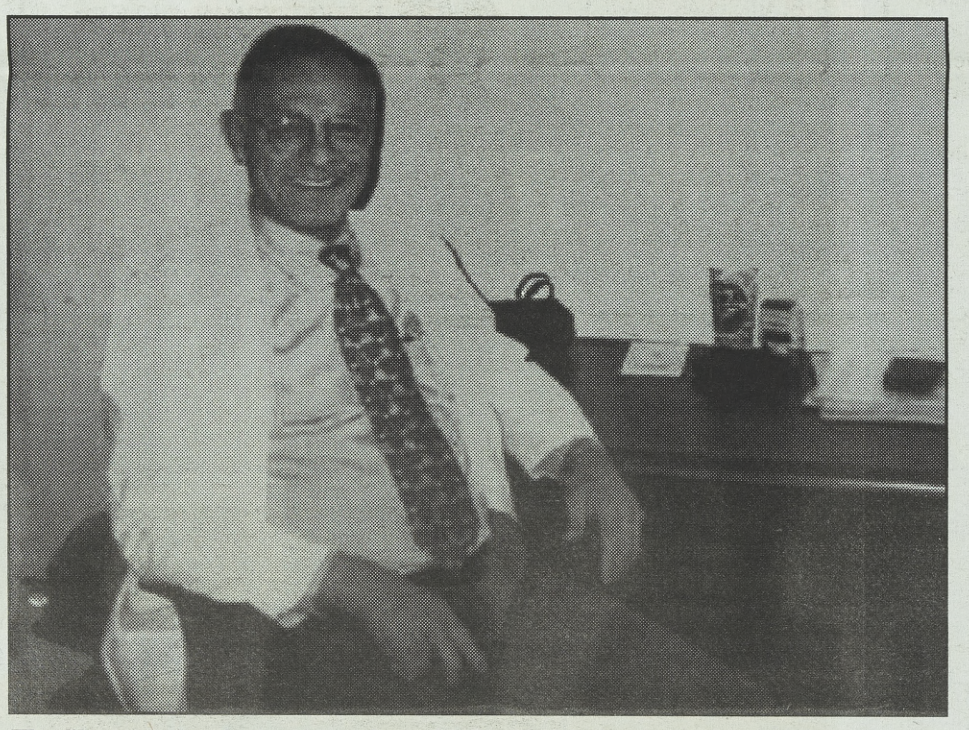
Burch shows great initiative in interviewing so many serious, well-informed, intelligent, righteous persons from responsible organizations who have researched the issue of medical marijuana thoroughly, as well as homeless and marginalized people usually ignored by the major media.

The film includes commentary from Kris Hermes of American for Safe Access (ASA); Dr. Dale Geiringer of the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws (NORML); former S.F. District Attorney Terence Hallinan; Dr. Tod Mikuriya, who warned of parallels between the fall of the Roman Empire and modern America; well-known marijuana activist Dennis Peron; civil rights attorneys Matt Kumin and Bill Panzer; and Chris Conrad, activist and co-author with Mikki Norris and Virginia Resner of *Shattered Lives*, a book that exposes the abusive prison sentences for possession of marijuana.

Burch's film has some highly dramatic moments, along with numerous sober observations about this important issue. There are filmed scenes of pot-using people being bullied, brutalized, humiliated and degraded by the police. These are accompanied by some old scenes of violence in suppressing liquor in the Prohibition era (making alcohol illegal had a lot to do with the rise of organized crime, beginning with Al Capone and his gang).



The nation's war on marijuana is as misguided as the failed Prohibition laws. This poster is from the website of the National Organization to Reform Marijuana Laws (NORML). For more information about the war on pot, see http://www.norml.org



The film contains the last interview with Dr. Tod Mikuriya before his death.

Dr. Tod Mikuriya was a courageous activist whose research and medical experience led him to champion the cause of medical marijuana. In the film he states, "My claim to fame may be that I helped save cannabis from oblivion."

Marijuana was part of the stimulating milieu of black jazz musicians in the 1930s — and the war on pot has involved racist persecution of Blacks and Mexican-Americans. The film also shows that movie star Robert Mitchum was arrested for possession of marijuana. (I remember once reading an article about Mitchum where he said he had smoked marijuana since he "was a kid.")

Now and then, the film displays views of marijuana plants simply looking beautiful. Yet, in much of the film, an atmosphere of fear is projected. Many persons in power who make decisions, and the police who enforce the anti-pot laws, can be really mean and cruel.

A wholesome-looking, personable woman, Dot Bam Bach, cannabis trimmer, speaks of a surprising experience she had of a cop knowing the difference between pot (which can be an effective medication) and truly harmful drugs. Some legal officials and law officers are enlightened about pot. Pot users need not live in terror of some of the authorities.

The film presents a great deal of informative, rational discourse on the medical value of marijuana, and on the stupidity and dishonesty of the war on marijuana.

Marijuana can be a valuable medicine for relieving the symptoms of glaucoma, multiple sclerosis, and Alzheimer's disease, for reducing the nausea caused by chemotherapy, and for help with depression and some other mental illnesses.

The film begins with a jolting, slam-bang speech by the legendary Brownie Mary in People's Park. She defends medical marijuana with all the force and fury of a fire-and-brimstone preacher.

People with some ailments can suffer if they don't get marijuana, and people who use marijuana can suffer from police persecuting them.

For many, pot has a beneficial mellowing effect, and can help people be less stressed or angry. Marijuana provides physical benefits for many, as well as psychological and emotional benefits. In the film, patients with ailments testify about how marijuana often makes them more comfortable, less depressed, and more at ease about pain and mortality.

An unnamed Black man speaks out from personal experience about how pot relieved his depression and pain. He comes off as a regular "Joe Blow" sort of a guy. He's now able to function better when lots of other medicines didn't help him. He says that he finds marijuana to be a very mild way to let off pressure in a person's difficult daily life. He states, "There are so many benefits. Often I don't have to snap at my children out of stress. It's important to me every day."

In the film, the most interesting person is a street character, Christopher Trimbly, known on the street as Bones, or "The Infamous Bones." He is an activist and member of the Green Panthers, and he gives the impression of having lived what he talks about, more than many of the film's interview subjects.

Bones has had a great deal of experience in living homeless, and with his background and adventures, he shows the most interesting, engaging, vitally hip style and charm — a "rebel with a cause." This makes him stand out from the more impersonal manner of many of those interviewed.

Bones voiced his awareness of the danger of totalitarianism in the war on pot, and how that attack on freedom is connected to many other blows to freedom.

Bones stands out as a bright, valuable voice from the street, expressing passionate concern and understanding. He is also a talented, creative musician, and it would have helped the film to have featured one of his songs in favor of medical marijuana.

Interviewed in the film, Bones declares, "Any marijuana use is medical." He gives a critique of the entire society, saying, "We live in a capitalist society. Greed inspires America."

During the process of writing this review, I happened to meet Bones, and asked him to expand on his comments in the film. He was very open in speaking

See **California Chronicles** *page 11*

Documentary Films of Claire Burch

Visit Claire Burch's website to see a video catalogue of her documentary films and to purchase her DVDs.

Website: **www.claireburch.com**

Phone: **(510) 849-0153.**

Address: **Art and Education Media, 2747 Regent St. Berkeley CA 94705**

A Legacy of Illegal Spying, Murder and Mayhem

Commentary by Jack Bragen

George Bush is hard to figure out. He is not a stupid and foolish person, as he might have you believe. When you realize his intent is to deceive, his words and actions make a little more sense.

I believe Bush has a hidden agenda, and that agenda is massive. And he has accomplished at least 90 percent of what he set out to do.

It seems that a little less than a year from now, our president anticipates leaving office with a big smile on his face. This is partly because he has made permanent changes in the earth's landscape to his liking. Bush has done damage to us that we simply are unable to fix.

I assume he has set things up so the Bush family will be a permanent power in the geopolitical scheme well beyond his administration. He has earned the good will of enough super-rich people in the oil and defense industries to keep him in lifelong comfort and amusement. Bush has reconfigured the economy, the Constitution, society, and the global structure to suit his model.

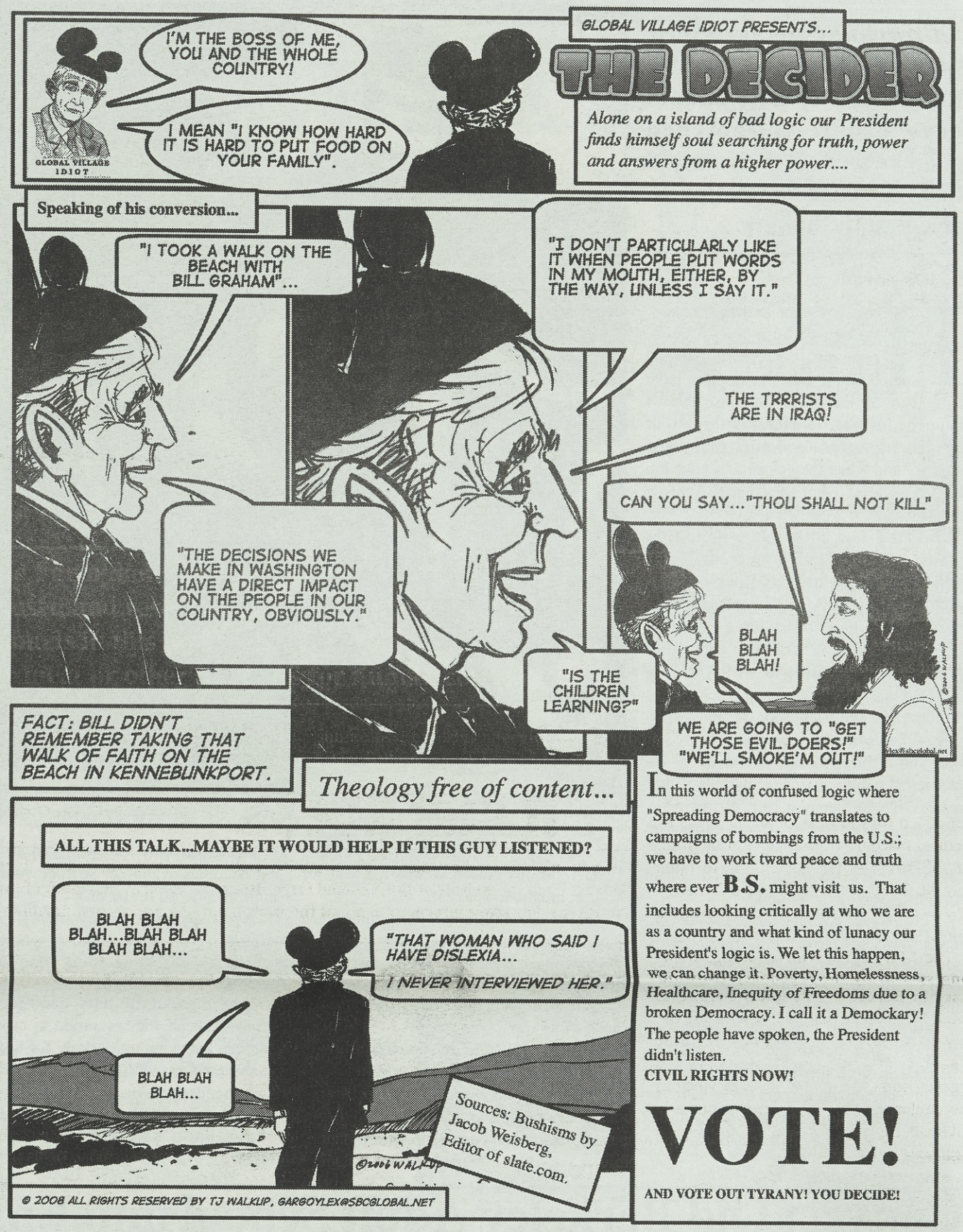
The caste system has been reintroduced into the United States. Certain demographic groups of people have slim chances of advancement. People have to be careful what they say, how they behave, where they go. Fear has been reintroduced into American society. Privacy doesn't exist.

Spying by the government upon the citizens has become acceptable even when illegal. It has become commonplace and accepted for government officials to violate the law in the name of national security. Those leaders who decide they are the law are rewarded by others standing back. It has become the rule of intimidation, rather than the rule of law in our country.

Internationally, Bush has set countries at war with each other instead of promoting reasonable international relations. This makes the weapons merchants a lot richer. Corporations reap billions of dollars in reconstruction contracts in the wake of the destruction caused by war. The medical technology companies, which design artificial body parts for soldiers who have been blown to pieces, also stand to gain from war.

Murder, malice and mayhem are the things that Bush envisions for humankind, instead of success, peace and prosperity. I cannot imagine why someone would want this for people.

However, it is clear from his actions that it is destruction and not progress that Bush seeks. There may still be time to impeach this war criminal. Doing this would be appropriate punishment.



California Chronicles of Medical Marijuana

from page 10

out. He said, "All marijuana use is technically medical, because when one uses marijuana, they're doing so to alter their brain chemistry and relax their body, without any bad side-effects, except the police."

Bones went on to indict the role of the government and its prison system. He said, "The United States government has whole sections of the population earmarked for prison. It's because they're paid for each prisoner, and the prison industry is one of the fastest-growing and largest-earning businesses in America, since they built the first American prison.

"The federal government is a giant bully who picks on, extorts from, imprisons, and enslaves the weak, the poor, the sick, and everybody else eventually. First, you arrest me for my medicine. Then, you arrest the next guy for illegal gambling. Then, you arrest a woman for possession of a deadly weapon, for the stun gun in her purse. Then, you arrest grandma for income-tax evasion because she was selling arts and crafts.

"My point is, as far as our government is concerned, every one of its citizens could be found guilty in a court of law and 'put on paper' the rest of their lives. And then, once you're on paper, you are technically no longer a citizen, and you no longer have any rights. Checkmate!"

Bones also expressed concern about the special problems confronting homeless people who need medical marijuana. He commented, "If you're homeless, where do you go to smoke your medicine without being considered a problem?"

Bones is a special combination: a man of great personal and mental vigor who lives in a haphazard way on the street. This has led him to observe and reflect a lot about our society. He has reflected about the painful, draining sense of powerlessness people have in an increasingly tyrannical establishment, a subject that George Orwell was renowned for writing about. At the end of his talk with me, he declared, "More power to us all!"

Bones also had an important criticism to make regarding the availability of marijuana. "I think the cannabis clubs are a terrific thing that patients need, but our medicine is ridiculously overpriced," he said. "The fact that the club can grow its own medicine to sell means that they could charge low prices if they want to."

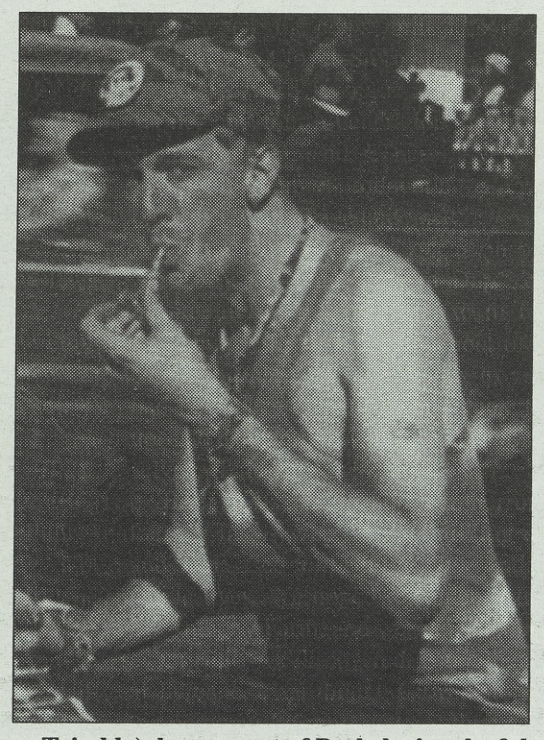
After all, how much money are most homeless people expected to have?

In Burch's film, marijuana stands out clearly as one particular aid for some of the immense suffering of humanity. The film combines passion with the cool balm of reason. It's packed with the richly communicative content of people from different positions and very different lifestyles.

"California Chronicles of Medical Marijuana" is successful in presenting a critical social issue, and the drama surrounding it, with much intelligence and commitment. It is staggering to consider the immense number of films of social value that Claire Burch has created.

"I think the cannabis clubs are a terrific thing that patients need, but our medicine is ridiculously overpriced. The fact that the club can grow its own medicine to sell means that they could charge low prices if they want to."

— Bones, a Berkeley activist, in *California Chronicles of Medical Marijuana*

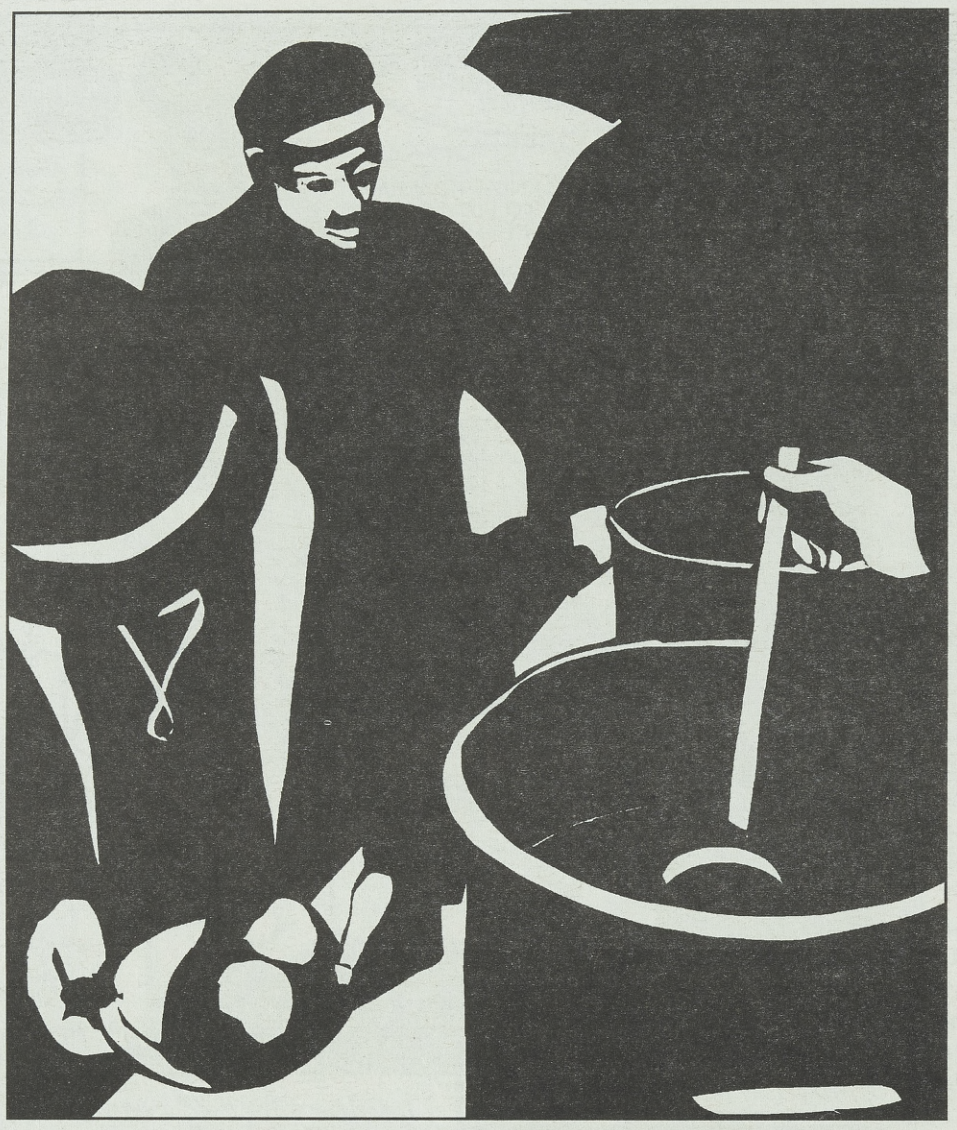


Shown above, Bones (Christoper Trimbly), long a part of Berkeley's colorful street scene, has some trenchant observations about our political system.

How to Get Free Food from a Good Restaurant

All religions command their follwers to give charity. Restaurant owners should have a more enlightened poicy regarding their unsold food. Instead of wasting it, give it to the hungry.

by Ray Avrutis



Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

Have you ever known a restaurant to be sold out of food, refusing to serve its patrons because other customers have bought up all the food? This just doesn't happen. Instead, restaurants throw out buckets of unsold food after each meal change, and when they close, it's your job to get some of what they usually throw out — before it's thrown away.

Invest a few dollars in a three-liter plastic container with a lid (or larger, if you have a family to feed). Rinse out your container often! A dirty container will spoil your chances of having a restaurant put fresh food in it. You may carry your plastic container around with you in a doubled plastic shopping bag.

Knock at the back door of any restaurant. When someone answers, politely say that you're hungry, and would she or he please fill your container with what would otherwise be thrown out. Going to a restaurant about five or 10 minutes before closing works. You might try those buffet-style places that serve food in large trays they sell by the pound.

You may take your children with you, if you have any. Don't be afraid to walk into the restaurant, and politely ask for food. And don't be hostile if you're turned away.

Just say, "God bless you," and leave. Perhaps that person's heart will be changed in time for the next hungry and destitute person who enters the restaurant.

Remember, you are only asking for food the restaurant can't sell because no one will buy it. It's leftovers, sort of like USDA surplus commodities that you, of course, are anxious to eat.

Try to ask at different restaurants every day. Showing up once or twice a week at any one place is enough. Of course, if you are fortunate enough to establish a good rapport with someone, then you could go back every day.

If you're asked to do something to help the restaurant, such as take out the garbage, do so if you are physically able. They help you, and you help them. They may even offer you a job that includes free meals if they like you, and an opening becomes available. So state your willingness to work for them.

Ask for plastic eating utensils and a napkin if you need them, so you aren't forced to eat your food like a cave dweller.

It is important to have good interpersonal skills. If the restaurant is crowded, you can leave without asking for food. Go to the next place. The object is to make your needs known, but not to interfere with the restaurant's normal functioning.

Rebember, by serving you what they would otherwise throw away, they're doing you a favor. Remember to thank them.

Some restaurants give their surplus food to a charity. Even so, ask the restaurant employee if you can have some of that food for yourself. Just tell the person that you need charity yourself. Or ask for the charity's address. Go there in person with your container.

Be sober and respectful. And if one restaurant won't give you any food, go to another, and then to another, until you are successful.

Given the climate today, some restaurants may refuse to give you their excess food because they're afraid you'll get "food poisoning." So while they'll sell you their food, they'll throw it in the garbage (or give it "to charity") instead of giving it to you. This policy is inherently wicked becasuse it causes needless suffering: hunger.

While some restaurant managers or owners will find a constant flow okf poor, hungry people a nuisance, others will see it, correctly, as a way to earn good karma with Whomever is in charge of deciding your fate when you leave this earthly plane.

To the best of my knowledge, all of this world's religions command their follwers to give charity. Perhaps restaurant owners will now have a more enlightened poicy regarding their unsold food: Instead of wasting it, they'll give it away.

And remember that the rule of good karma applies to everyone. If you have money left over after meeting your own needs, offer to take the next panhandler who asks you for "spare change" to a restaurant for a meal, your treat.

If people who aren't poor and hungry follow the steps I've outlined, just to see if they can get free food, they may well find themselves poor and broke in their next lifetime. In other words, avoid this type of scrounging if you have money.

But if you need it, it's all yours, a gift of survival as originally told to me years ago by the late Bruce Barnes, an outstandingly fine visual artist.

Convert Old Berkeley Adult School into Emergency Housing

by Randall Reed Busang

Berkeley's old Adult School complex still sits empty, idle, deteriorating, just as it did when I arrived in Berkeley three years ago. I've had countless conversations with Berkeley's homeless residents, frequently centering on how the old, unused Adult School would make an ideal shelter complex.

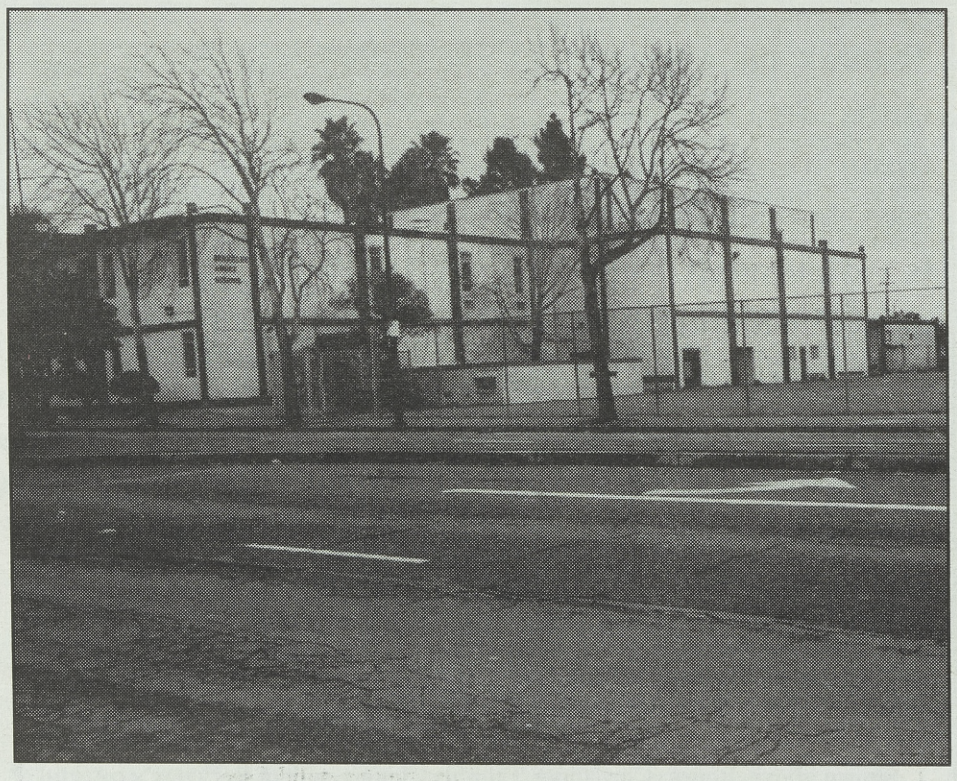
The building, located at 1255 University Avenue, has large expanses of space for dormitories, numerous lavatories and several full-service kitchens.

It is disastrous for city officials to ignore the potential of this site to provide desperately needed emergency housing for some of Berkeley's thousands of homeless residents.

Homelessness is undesirable, so the old social-reform thinking went, and if homelessness is made as disagreeable as possible, homeless people will disappear. This is a tidy way to justify allocating as little as possible from public funds for services to the homeless populace.

Too much of so-called social-reform thinking remains based on the underlying fallacy that the poor themselves are to blame for their poverty.

Millions of Americans are currently jobless and homeless, the majority through little fault of their own. The United States continues to squander billions and billions on the space program, and on futile military, educational and crime-fighting programs and foreign aid packages.



Berkeley's old Adult School on University Avenue could provide housing for many of the homeless people neglected by city officials. Randall Reed Busang photo

I came to Berkeley believing in its model programs like the Center for Independent Living. Berkeley was the first town in the United States to have a CIL, the first to make sidewalks and public transportation wheelchair accessible.

There is no reason why the old Adult School could not become a town-sized work project, with those who would benefit most working to make it habitable.

Homeless people and their friends and supporters could clean and repair the facility, collect necessities for bedding, and canvas Berkeley's many restaurants and supermarkets for food to augment the government surplus allotment.

The key to making the shelter a humane residential program would be to end the outdated dictate that homeless clients must be turned out in the wee hours of the morning to wander the mean streets, even in the most inclement weather.

A realistic program allowing for all-day living accommodations, with long-term stays of several months, would give homeless people a real opportunity to contact distant family or work with social agencies to find subsidized housing.

Those who receive government checks could contribute a stipend for board. Berkeley's homeless population, given a real chance to help themselves, could become a model for national reform.

STRUCTURAL UNEMPLOYMENT

Channel surfing one night in 2005, I caught Jim Jeffords, now retired as the Independent senator from Vermont on Fox News' "O'Reilly Factor."

Asked what he thought was America's greatest problem, Jeffords immediately replied, "Unemployment."

The Fox News commentator was taken aback. "What?" O'Reilly snapped, trade-

See **Berkeley's Abandoned People** *page 15*

HATS OFF TO ALL MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS

by Michael Creedon

There's people on the street
that are a good part living
and a good part dead.
We walk on by and shake our heads.
Dying organ by organ of malnutrition,
dying spiritually because we've let them go.
We're all connected,
it's wrong to say "not so."
But we treat somebody every day
like they're not part of us.
They start to wonder what's wrong
with them, and wither up and die inside.
Some go Bible-nuts and for some it works
but they're avoided all the more
and treated like a freak.
The ones that were born strong enough
find the inner light inside
and understand that money
is not man's holy guide.
But generally the older you get
the harder to survive.
They lose their savoir faire
and their jingle jangle smiling come-on.
If they drink or drug, the
organs wither up and it's suicide
by lack of love—both inner and outer —
you need love to stay alive.
So hats off to all my brothers and sisters
who made a wrong turn
or just didn't get the breaks.

Room for Beauty

by Joan Clair

In Berkeley's downtown business district
early in the morning, too early for enmity,
there's a man asleep in a sleeping bag
on a bench on the sidewalk near the street.
All his belongings are orderly,
placed neatly near his sleeping body,
but what takes my breath away is the
beauty of the paintings surrounding him
as if he placed them there
so that his last glimpses before sleep
would be beautiful and good. Suddenly
I'm seeing a soul asleep in his room,
a sanctuary which celebrates beauty,
illuminated by more than a street light.
And I know there are millions
in so-called real homes
who have never done what he has.

Clean Ups

by Joan Clair

A homeless person lying on the street,
asleep on bench, in doorway
is a subject deep,
a subject clean,
very, very clean indeed
for one whose heart has room enough
to weep.

But something filthy and corrupt
is in the hearts of those who wake them up
and cite them for the crime
of being without a dime,
without a blanket or a bed,
without a pillow for their head —
something very unclean,
very, very unclean,
better left unsaid.

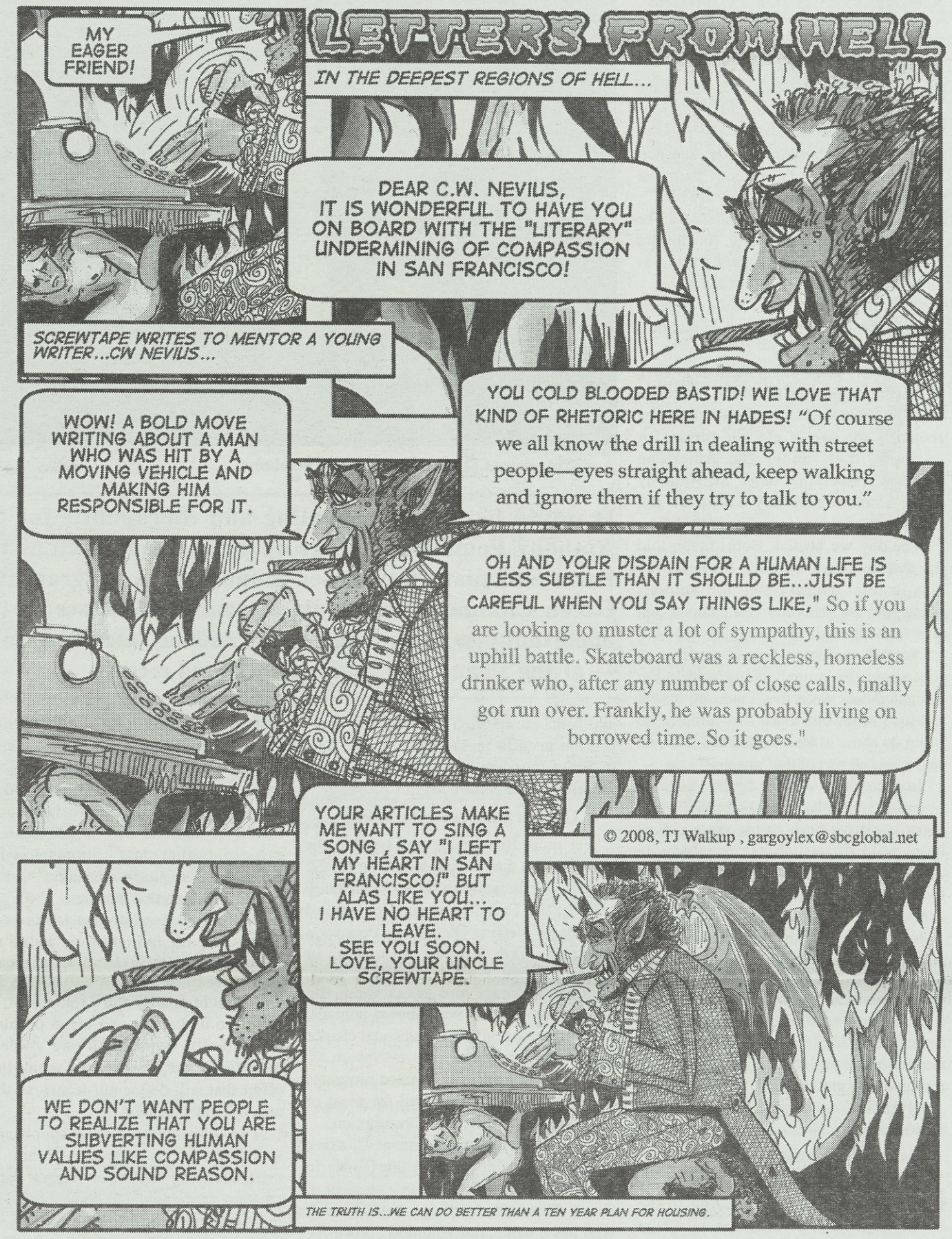
"More Foreclosures"

by Claire J. Baker

These words make the Headline News
in this great big city.
"More Foreclosures" on street people?
Let's check the ongoing street-people blues

Seems the truest answer is foreclosures
on the unhoused seldom make the
sub-prime-loan-time news
in any razzle-dazzle city.
Saint Francis, Saint Peter, Whoever Wins
this questions: Where goes compassion?
The first and last pangs of pity?

Praise from Hell for *Chronicle's* Poor-Bashing



Art by TJ Walkup

drop your head and weep

by Judy Joy Jones

drop your heads
and weep
for the homeless
found frozen
on the streets

while we laid
in our cozy little beds
all warm and fed
with dollar signs
dancin thru our heads

who will hear our own
blood curdling screams
as we die freezing
on the streets

will one person leave
their warm homes
to claim our no-name bodies
at the cities morgue's doors

oh people
please drop your heads
and weep
and weep
and weep
for the homeless
found frozen
all over the streets

Homeless Us

by Mike Burch

The coldest night I ever knew
the wind out of the arctic blew
long frigid blasts; and I was you.

We huddled close then: yes, we two.
For I had lost your house. I rue
the bitter weather, being you.

Our empty tin cup sang the Blues,
clanged-hollow, empty. Carols few
were sung to me, for being you.

For homeless us, all men eschew.
They beat us, roust us, jail us too.
It isn't easy, being you.

Supernatural Sanctity

by Judy Jones

an old beggar
on the street did I see
pushing all he owned
in hs grocery cart home

weary swollen feet
hadn't a bite to eat

on the beggars
grave will read
he had a life
of supernatural sanctity

Getting Old Blues

by Michael Creedon

Living this life
ain't good enough for me.
My standard of living
ain't what it ought to be.
Time to go shopping;
no peaches on the tree.
I think I'm going to pray
for a better life.

Walking down the street,
pretty chicks walk by
but they don't take
no look at me.
When a man's got money
it's a different tale —
their eyes get a look
like they seen a blue whale.

Living this way
gets your spirits down.
A case of the blues
makes you want to
leave this town.
But I've gotten too old
to hop a freight.
Till the good day comes
I'll just have to wait.

Franciscan Values and Compassion for Animals

from page 6

which adhere to the standards set by the American Meat Institute, the American Humane Association does not require humane standards governing the transport of animals raised at St. Anthony Farm nor the slaughterhouses where they are sent.

How humane a slaughterhouse can be is a debatable issue for many. As Howard Lyman puts it, "Is there such a thing as 'humane meat?' If victims are given a nice, warm bowl of soup before putting them in the gas chambers, would that be a humane holocaust?"

However, some slaughterhouses have at least attempted to make the process a little less traumatic for the animals, by reducing the use of electric prods, for example. Yet, under the American Humane Association label, St. Anthony Farm's accountability stops at the moment the animals leave the farm.

The day we visited, Bob Linden told me that he spoke with one resident who was in total denial about the animals being sold for slaughter and claimed that it never happened.

Another resident told me he was in conflict about the animals being sold to the slaughterhouse once they could no longer produce milk, but there was nothing he could do about it. He sounded sad when he said it was all part of the "process."

In a brochure put out by St. Anthony Foundation entitled "St. Anthony Farm," there is no mention of the male calves being sold for slaughter or the female cows meeting this fate at the end of their lives, not even in the section called, "The Life Cycle of a Dairy Cow."

Involving human individuals who have been victims themselves in a process that victimizes nonhuman individuals doesn't seem to be in accord with Franciscan values. Following Franciscan principles means being humane to all creatures, not treating others as units of production. It means being grateful and humble for the good that is done for us by others, even if those others are farm animals.

Martin de Porres and the dog

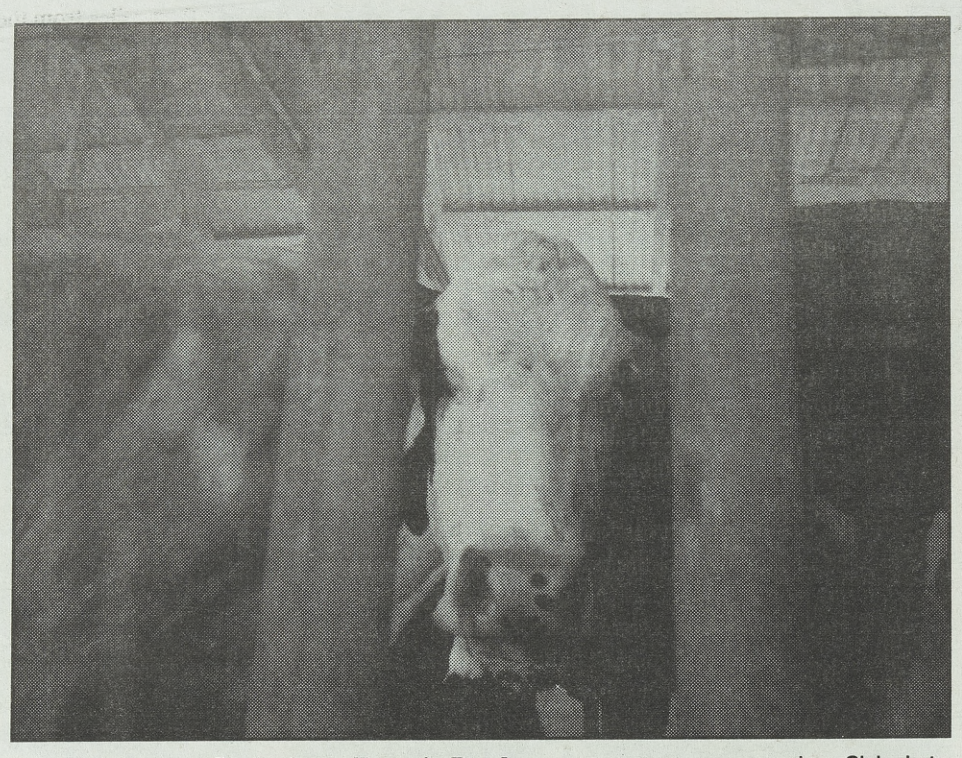
St. Martin de Porres exemplifies this in a story about a dog. According to the book, *Martin de Porres, Hero,* by Claire Huchet Bishop, in St. Martin's religious order, the procurator had an old dog who was "not of use anymore."

"He gave orders to have the dog killed. (Martin) took the dog away, brought him back to his cell and… nursed him back to life." Martin de Porres then told the dog, "Now, don't you ever go back to your ungrateful master. You must know by this time how little your long years of faithfulness have been appreciated."

How little the long years of service by the dairy cows at St. Anthony Farm are appreciated. The mothers have their male babies taken away; they are given numbers, not names, as units of production; and they are artificially inseminated. At the end of their lives, they are sold to be slaughtered in terror and fear.

How can any of this conform to the Franciscan values of compassion and respect for all creatures, as creations of God?

In *Saint Francis: Nature Mystic,* Edward Armstrong wrote that St. Francis "believed and showed that love of God, love of (humans) and love of nature were not only compatible with one another but the natural, divinely purposed state of humanity... He did not separate the interests of God, humans and nature, as we do, to our detriment spiritually and the earth's impoverishment. It is a measure of how materialistically minded we have become (that) the preservation of the earth's flora and fauna are so often based on self-interest, the need to preserve plants and animals for (humans') use and enjoyment." [*Saint Francis: Nature Mystic,* p. 242.]



A milking cow at St. Anthony Farm in Petaluma. Joan Clair photo

It would be far more healing and therapeutic for St. Anthony Foundation to set up a sanctuary such as the Farm Sanctuary for abused animals, or a program like Green Chimneys, which gives troubled adolescents the opportunity to work with abused animals, including cows — giving all an equal chance to heal and recover.

Giving animals sanctuary

Far more therapeutic and healing for both animals and people would be for St. Anthony Foundation to set up a sanctuary such as the Farm Sanctuary for abused animals in Watkins Glen, New York, or a program like Green Chimneys in Brewster, New York, which takes troubled adolescents and gives them the opportunity to work with abused animals, including cows, giving all an equal chance to heal and recover.

None of the animals in these programs are ever slaughtered or bred for meat or other products for human consumption.

A video made of the annual Blessing of the Animals at St. John the Divine in New York City shows a young resident of Green Chimneys leading a healthy cow, who has a name, not a number, down the aisle to be blessed by a priest.

Some of the people watching the animals being so loved and cherished are moved to tears. Franciscan values are certainly visible in this event.

'Religious Proclamation For Animal Compassion'

Religious activists from many denominations are beginning an urgent appeal to the entire interfaith community to begin speaking out for more compassionate treatment of animals — an issue they say goes to the very heart of their faith.

On Nov. 7, 2007, congressional representatives, ministers, rabbis, priests, and leaders of the major religious denominations met in the historic Cannon Caucus Room on Capitol Hill, and came together to sign a "Religious Proclamation For Animal Compassion."

The proclamation was initiated to create new momentum in the interfaith community to uphold the rights of animals to be protected from abuse and cruelty.

Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) spoke in favor of the proclamation, telling the interfaith assembly, "Kindness to animals builds a better world for all of us." Lantos said that, with the help of the religious community, change for the better was inevitable on the issue of animal welfare.

Rep. Betty Sutton (D-Ohio), Rep. Jim Moran (D-Virginia) and Rep. Christopher Shays (R-Conn.) also attended the event and spoke in favor of the "Religious Proclamation For Animal Compassion."

Rep. Shays, one of the strongest advocates for animals in Congress, told the interfaith group that their proclamation on behalf of animals was "a consensus of principles that puts compassion into action for all of God's creatures."

The proclamation declares:

"As people from diverse religious traditions, we are united in our belief that animals have intrinsic value as part of God's creation and are entitled to live lives free of cruelty and exploitation. We therefore invite and encourage people of all faiths to speak with one voice on behalf of those who cannot speak in an effort that will define our legacy as stewards of God's creation."

The proclamation then specifically speaks out for the protection of farm animals, declaring "that as an integral part of creation, farm, wild and domesticated animals depend upon us, both directly and indirectly, for their welfare," and affirms that "religious communities bear a special responsibility for the welfare of these animals, and that as ambassadors of compassion, religious communities should extend compassion not only to the human family but to animals and to all creation."

Green Chimneys

Green Chimneys is a treatment program for young people at risk and emotionally injured youths, as well as abused and rescued animals. This program gives traumatized children the healing experience of caring for the well-being of animals.

Green Chimney's treatment plan and recreational services include: animal-assisted therapy, service dog training, therapeutic horseback riding, wildlife rehabilitation, organic gardening, and horticulture therapy. The program also has a computer lab and a woodshop.

At Green Chimneys, a brochure states, "animals work with people in a therapeutic relationship. They are partners and friends and their welfare and comfort is ensured at all times."

Dr. Samuel B. Ross, Jr., the founder of Green Chimneys, told me that the children heal the animals and vice versa. He said the children and animals learn from each other. They learn unconditional love and acceptance of each other.

When asked if any of the cows or other animals are sold to slaughterhouses at the end of their lives for meat, Dr. Ross said, "We do not eat our therapists. We are here to make relationships." He said the animals at Green Chimneys die a natural death.

Green Chimneys

Green Chimneys is a treatment program that gives traumatized and at-risk youth the healing experience of caring for the well-being of animals.

Contact: Green Chimneys, Doansburg Road Box 719, Brewster, New York, 10509-0719. Phone: (845) 279-2995. Website: www.greenchimneys.org

The Farm Sanctuary

The Farm Sanctuary provides a safe refuge for hundreds of abused and rescued farm animals.

Contact: Farm Sanctuary, New York Shelter, P.O. Box 150, Watkins Glen, NY 14891. Phone (607) 583-2225. Calif. Shelter, P.O. Box 1065, Orland, CA 95963. Phone (530) 865-4617. Website: www.farmsanctuary.org

The Farm Sanctuary

The Farm Sanctuary provides care for hundreds of abused and rescued farm animals yearly. As they put it in describing their mission, "Most people think of farm animals as 'breakfast, lunch, or dinner.' "

By contrast, at the Farm Sanctuary, an "adoption commitment directly saves animals from their nightmare of 'food animal' production and gives them a life they once only dreamed of."

Gene Baur, cofounder of the Farm Sanctuary, located in Watkins Glen, New York, with a branch in Orland, California, said that when cows are exploited for milk they are commodified and no longer treated as sentient beings. "Commodifying life creates insensitivity," he said.

Baur said he would be happy to help St. Anthony Foundation plan a way to phase out the dairy farm, if they want to move in that direction, by assisting them, as much as possible, to set up an adoption program which would enable the cows to live out their lives in a sanctuary where they would be cherished.

Joan Clair is a theologian and animal rights activist. She graduated with both a Master of Divinity degree and an M.A. in Theology from Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley. Rev. Andrew Linzey, a theologian at Mansfield College in Oxford, has stated: "Clair has the accolade of being first in the world to do serious work on the theology and practice of animal-inclusive liturgies."

Cry of a Calf

by Joan Clair

My mother nurses metal at her breast
instead of me, and soon I will be dead,
put away in a dark crate
to make me tender flesh.
The tenderness of mother and child,
our anguished cries, escape
the hardened minds and hearts
of those who separate.
And both of us have the same fate.
For service, she gets slaughtered
in horror, pain and terror.
Machines no longer nurse her,
but prod and poke
and finally slit her throat.
What is left of her will be consumed.
A lifetime of giving milk
receives no gratitude.
Never retired to pasture, she,
to live her life out naturally.
The cost would be too great for
productivity, the god of inhumanity.
And the cost to us is great —
the death of the Mother in our soul,
the one who loves us all —
the madness of metal milking Her.

Nurturing Creativity of Young Artists

from page 1

ing session is for B-Tech students who get class credit for participating, while the afternoon is wide open.

Hindman said, "We gets kids from everywhere — foster care kids, street kids, kids in transitional housing — all below poverty level."

Youth Spirit Art Works provides an opportunity for the kids to be creative and to explore new ideas, and at the same time, it is a serious learning experience.

Staff member Jennyann Carthern explains how she has the young people work through the process, from formulating the concept to creating the finished product. She talks about "teaching for understanding" the artisitc elements of design, line and color.

"Art classes are a good way to actively engage the students in learning," she said.

Another staff member, Ana Hernandez, said that on first hearing about the program, "I thought it was a great thing to combine art with positive outlet for youth. Especially most of these kids aren't familiar with art and it's nice to expose them to something."

Hernandez described her experience studying art history and discovering the work of Jackson Pollock, the abstract expressionist who dripped and splattered paint on the canvas. She introduced the technique to the kids, in the process "giving them a little lesson in art history" and inspired some of them to experiment with it. Hernandez has found that her degree in psychology, with a minor in art history, is a good combination for the work she does.

Youth Spirit Art Works is modeled after YaYa (Young Aspirations, Young Artists), a New Orleans furniture painting program for low-income youth that was founded in 1988. That program has changed the lives of thousands of young people as well as being a hugely successful business enterprise.

This spring, six teens who have done outstanding work with Youth Spirit will be accompanied by program staff on a one-week trip to New Orleans to meet with artists and activists. This will be a new experience for the youth. Youth Spirit has been soliciting frequent flyer miles from the public to help pay for the trip.

A second program area involves producing art for the community — art with a message. The program is called Beautiful South Berkeley Benches and Bollards (bollards are street barriers).

The young artists will be working with paints and mosaic tiles and will be "making 10 painted art benches, eight mosaic bollards, three tiled traffic turnarounds," Hindman said. "All of these works are on the theme of health," she explained.

"We're working in conjunction with Health Access Coalition, which is working for health care reform, also with the City of Berkeley Department of Public Health, using art making in the community this year as a vehicle for doing public education around health care."

Hindman said her group feels it's very important to be involved in the issue of health care in low-income communities.

"We have a 20-year disparity between the life span of a white person versus a black person," she said. "African-American people are dying 20 years earlier than white people in our community. So we're trying to work with people, using the leadership of youth in order to promote health in South and West Berkeley."

A third program area is planned for the future. The plan is for artists who have gained experience through Youth Spirit to become "senior artists." She said, "They can graduate up to that level where they're teaching in the elementary school. Giving back to the community by teaching."

Youth Spirit has received support from a number of sources, including a grant from the City of Berkeley. Hindman lists a number of different foundations who have contributed. "We're getting almost everything we applied for," she said. "These programs are desperately needed."

Just getting jobs is not an adequate solution for many people.

"What this is about," she explained, "is meeting people where they are and working with them and recognizing that... some people have some limitations in what they're able to do and this allows them to really blossom in their own way. So that if they're struggling with mental illness, if they're struggling with trying to get their life together, they can work at their own pace and they can make money."

While I Sleep

by Michael Creedon

Every day gets colder.
I need a better coat.
I'm only thinking of myself:
I'd like some winter boots.

And that poor guy
crouched over there
shivering in summer rags —
what will he do
when stormy winter blasts?
What will he do
when it gets too cold to sleep?

I'll shut my windows,
and turn on the heat,
cuddle in my blankets
with a kitty at my feet.

But what will he do
in the shattering streets of rain?
What will he do
when he's got nowhere to go?
I think about myself,
complaining when the pilot goes out.
But oh my God in everything,
what will he do while I sleep?

Baskets of Tears

by Claire J. Baker

Here on once-Ohlone Indian land
an old spring still flows across
this Berkeley backyard of bayleaf,
redwoods, giant oaks, ferns,
native grasses.

I come to feed, water, befriend
four cats. But first I recline
on a window seat under a
skylight -- branches beside
and beyond the large glass.
A spider web holds three
raindrops. I hear the start of
the Moonlight Sonata.
I hold back tears
so the cats won't notice.

Briefly I read of Ohlone squaws:
They walked miles to gather
berries; prepared acorns
each day all their years,
weaved baskets for every chore --
even for toting precious water.

Tree Invocations

by Claire J. Baker

When given to trembling
may we quake
as shimmering aspen.

If gone astray, may we drift
as fallen leaves
back to our branches.

Like cypress, we lean away
from storms; in grief
weep like willows.

Should fate rub us raw
between rough fingers,
ah, eucalyptus tang.

Like desert cottonwoods
we push our roots deeper
toward moisture.

Finally as venerable oaks
may we provide shade
for all who pass our way.

A Needy Woman

by Maureen Hartmann

I was doing some business in the drab
Social Security Administration room
when a shabbily dressed woman
walked in past the security guard and
began pressing several printed need-choices
in the menu on the check-in computer screen.
The security guard asked her to please
press only one item, and apparently
reached in front of her to press one choice.
She said, "Don't touch me."
He said, "Please sit down" and compassionately,
"I'd never touch you."
She wandered over in front of the seated people
waiting to be called to various numbered
windows which dealt with different needs.
From my experience, several needs,
May be taken care of at one window.
I told her from my seat, "They take care
of several problems at the window."
I wish that I had had the courage to stand up
and go over to her, put my hand on her shoulder,
and call her "love," as I said this.
She did learn the SSA procedure,
and calmed down.

The Janitor and the Ballerina

by Joanna Bragen

There once was a janitor and a ballerina
who started out pretty well intact

Then along the way
Someone came down to say
We are going to keep you not so intact

So the story changed
For them both
And it almost was like
Taking an oath

We will see some hard times
But will meet in due time
And that will recover us both

So they spent their next days with
Trouble and strife

Bad,bad leroy brown
And the like
Locked up, pushed around
Following losers
All up and down

And then finally they said
"Hey enough is enough."

Then the janitor and the ballerina met
For a free cup of coffee and stuff

She almost didn't see the light at first
And he was just a little bit of a jerk
But then they decided
"This is alright."

So the ballerina asked him to wed
"I'll do more than just that" he said

And they went to the ball
And he found the glass shoe
And the rest has already
Been said

So a prince and a princess were born
And their kingdom was not
just all in their heads

Good fortune shone upon them
And love grew everywhere

And they asked "How in the world
did we end up right here?"

Well as the story goes
You reap what you sow

And they had to wait a long time
For their chance

But when it came
It was tenfold

And though things were not perfect
They always had each other
And happily ever after
Can come true

If you kick your heels hard enough
And get a little bit up on your luck

The janitor and the ballerina
could happen to you

Berkeley's Abandoned People

from page 12

mark glibness momentarily punctured. "Bigger than the war in Iraq — or illegal immigration?"

Right-on, Mr. Jeffords, I thought.

Nobody, much less our governing politicians, will admit as much, but America may currently be in as bad or worse shape than it was during the Great Depression, when breadlines stretched for city blocks, thousands of families went homeless, and masses of Oakies and Arkies migrated to the Promised Land formerly known as California.

Large sectors of the manufacturing industries that created countless jobs that made Americans prosperous are long departed — having relocated and reformed as Third World sweatshops.

Family farms, especially in the Midwest, went under during the 1980s and nobody but Willie Nelson seemed to give a damn. Our universities have long since become adjuncts to Big Business.

ABANDONED BY SOCIETY

Some of the homeless, I suppose, deserve the label "undesirables." How about the alcoholic Vietnam vets who sprawl nightly on Berkeley pavements, victims of a disgraceful, futile war nobody wanted? They have since been joined by the Gulf War vets.

Then there are the twenty and thirty-something victims of the social and educational "war on boys," including homeless youth, street-level drug dealers, and other alienated young men living on the social margins.

Several years ago, the ever-elitist *New York Times* ran a full color feature on these jungfolk and their culture and music in the devastated Midwest, warning the affluent, liberal, elite readership about their "dangerous" anger and lifestyle.

Are the disenfranchised "dangerous?" You betcha.

Like many in the East Bay, I suppose, I was shocked when the Siberian tiger at the San Francisco Zoo killed a young male bystander, and mauled two others at Christmastime.

Surely there is a symbolic warning to be taken from this inexplicable holiday tragedy. A quote from Churchill kept running through my head.

"Dictators ride about on tigers from which they dare not dismount. And the tigers are growing hungry."

San Francisco's Scandalous Neglect of Disabled People



Is this the mark of a civilized society? In San Francisco, disabled homeless people suffer in public. Others are dumped from hospitals onto the cold streets. Robert Terrell photo



A homeless man on crutches lies on a San Francisco sidewalk. Robert Terrell photo



A homeless person in a wheelchair is shrouded by a blanket. Robert Terrell photo

The plight of San Francisco's disabled homeless people reminds one of Third World settings where catastrophic poverty and horrific streetside suffering are common.

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kinds of assistance, from sympathetic strangers.

Unfortunately, their handicaps preclude them from possessing the sort of muscle necessary to command begging stations guaranteed to produce significant money and assistance. Rather, they tend to be relegated to unattractive locations frequented by the least generous segments of our live-and-let-die social order.

Close inspections frequently reveal that the city's wheelchair-bound beggars are attired in open-backed gowns bearing the stenciled initials of some of the most prominent San Francisco hospitals. They commonly wear plastic wristbands bearing their names, an indication that they were recently discharged directly from a hospital to the mean, cold streets.

On more occasions than I care to recall, I have observed a homeless, disabled person sitting alone along a major thoroughfare in a wheelchair affixed with a flimsy plastic bag containing bandages, wipes and plastic bottles of medicine.

This horrific neglect is symbolically magnified by the pervasive icons of conspicuous consumption which dominate many of San Francisco's prominent public places. Such icons include glitzy advertisements of the sort deployed by firms such as Abercrombie and Fitch, the Gap, Macy's, Nordstrom's, Neiman Marcus and Saks.

Nike's "Just Do It" advertisements take on a different meaning when one ponders them from the perspective of legless beggars. The advertisement's smug admonition is also discordant regarding reality as it is experienced by the large number of dazed and disoriented people who wander the city's streets in dire need of assistance.

Tortured by inner demons, incapable of normal discourse, trapped in personal prisons that render them incapable of helping themselves in ways that might mitigate their awful dilemma, the mentally disabled are obviously incapable of responding as recommended by the ubiquitous Nike advertisement.

The overall plight of San Francisco's disabled homeless people reminds one of Third World settings where catastrophic poverty and horrific streetside suffering are common. One of the most notable differences is the fact that the leaders of desperately poor Third World municipalities can almost always legitimately blame such suffering on inadequate infrastructure and endemic poverty, if not the legacy of sustained, rapacious colonial domination.

But San Franciscans, who are among the wealthiest urban residents on earth, cannot legitimately lay claim to such exculpatory explanations regarding the poverty and human suffering which abounds around them.

Given the self-centered, ostentatious wealth flaunted by the wealthy, "beautiful people" who dominate San Francisco's civic affairs, the largely preventable suffering endured by its handicapped homeless residents is obviously attributable to factors other than endemic poverty and inadequate infrastructure.

Rather, San Francisco's failure to provide sufficient services for its poverty-stricken, disabled residents is a product of multi-generational, institutionalized forms of casual cruelty and social neglect deeply embedded in the culture and basic psyche of the city's leadership castes.

San Francisco is of course not unique in this regard. Similar suffering, denial and neglect can be commonly witnessed on the streets of major cities in virtually every section of the United States.

Moreover, there is little hope to be gained from the professed agendas of most local and national political leaders regarding the unacceptably high rate of preventable human suffering to be found on the streets in the cities and towns of this profoundly confused nation.

One assumes that eventually the necessary reforms will be articulated, budgeted and implemented. But in the interim, large numbers of disabled people will continue to congregate on our streets, symbols of a society all too comfortable with the grotesque reality of criminal neglect.